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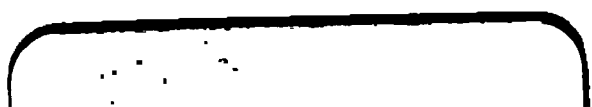


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HAPPY ACRE

EDNA TURPIN





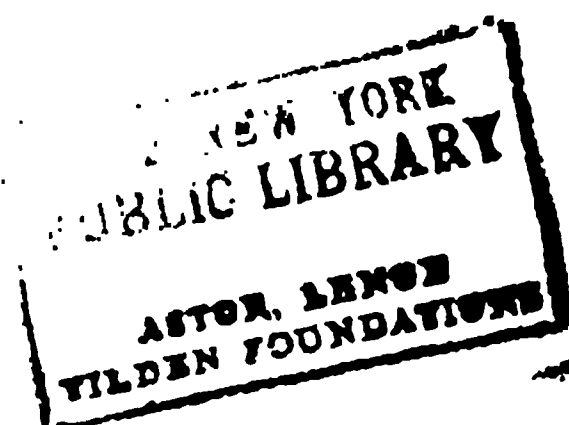
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"HERE'S WISHING THE MILL A FUTURE AS GOOD AS ITS PAST"

HAPPY ACRES

BY

EDNA H. L. TURPIN

AUTHOR OF "HONEY SWEET," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY MARY LANE McMILLAN

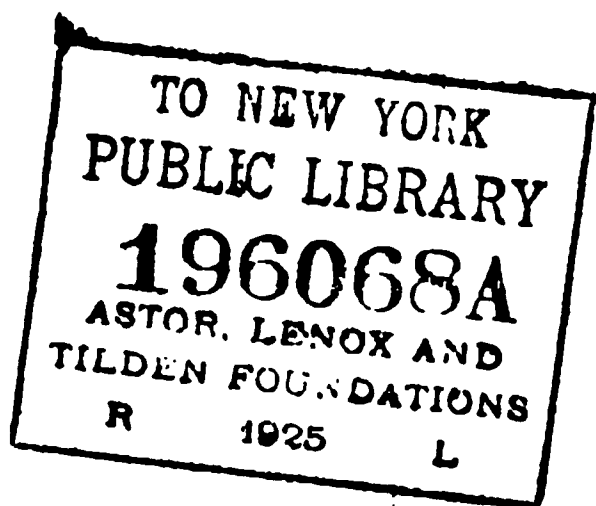
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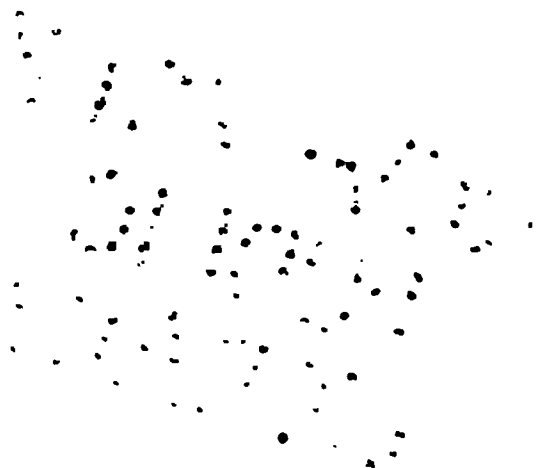
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TO ELIZABETH WILSON:

With deep and grateful regard for those whose name you bear, I send this story to you, dear little lady whose face I have never seen.

I hope that now you will add Anne and her cousins and her scribe to the number of your friends, and that even in older years you will keep a corner in your heart for The Village, in the like of which were born and bred your kinsfolk and mine.

EDNA TURPIN.

"ECHO HILL," ANTLERS, VIRGINIA,
September, 1913.

HAPPY ACRES

CHAPTER I

“**H**OW d’you do, Cousin Giles ? She’s coming to-day !”

It was merry little freckle-faced, auburn-haired Patsy Osborne that spoke and she was standing on tiptoe to peep in the mill door, the high wagon door where grist is loaded and unloaded. Cousin Giles had his back to the door. He was whistling as he filled a meal bag, but his tune was lost in the rumble and clatter of the mill.

“Cousin Giles !” the girl shouted and then louder than before, “Cousin Giles, uh Cousin Giles !”

The miller stopped whistling and looked around. He was a stout, good-natured man with shining dark eyes that seemed the brighter and darker because all the

rest of him — face, hair, and garments — was powdered with meal till he looked like his namesake, a plump moth miller.

“Oh ! that’s you, Patsy, is it ?” he asked.

“It’s been me, standing here calling you the longest long time !” she exclaimed. “Mother said we might come in, if you invited us.”

“And who are ‘we’ ?” inquired the miller.

“Oh, Ruth and Dumpling ; and there’s Dick and David and Steve, of course ; and Sweet William would come with us. We tried to leave him but he just wouldn’t be left. They’re waiting ’round the corner to hear what you say.”

“Oh ! just Ruth — and Dumpling — and Dick — and David — and Steve — and Sweet William — and you.” Mr. Spotswood stretched the list out as long as possible. “And what may I expect to happen, if I invite you all to come in ? Remember the last time —”

“That was the boys,” interrupted Patsy. “Sweet William was playing that the corn-pile upstairs was a mountain and he was sliding down the side, and Dick pretended a dreadful storm came up and he threw handfuls of corn for hailstones and David threw handfuls —”

“Till my grain was scattered over the floor,” said the miller, trying to look severely at his twinkling-eyed little cousin.

“But we didn’t do that; it was the boys,” she reminded him.

“Oh! and who wasted good meal, powdering their faces and hair and clothes?” he demanded.

“That was only because we wanted to look like you,” Patsy explained. “You ought to feel compliflattered. We think you look so nice! But this time we’ll not one of us get in mischief. We’ll just stay near the door so as to see her when she comes by.”

““See her’?” repeated the miller, looking puzzled.

“Our new little cousin that’s to be at Cousin Mayo’s,” Patsy said. “We ran here soon as school was out, because this is the only place we can peep from. And, oh, please invite us in! Mother said it’s too cold for us to stay outdoors and we must come straight home, if you don’t want us. But you do want us, don’t you, dear Cousin Giles?” she said persuasively.

“Ah, Patsy, Patsy mavourneen, none of your blarney: he laughed. “Come in, come in, and please do as little mischief as you can.”

Patsy’s gleeful whoop brought six children around the corner. One had to count them twice to make sure of their number, for it was hard to believe that six children could make so much noise. There were two girls, — plump, fair Alice Blair whom every one called Dumpling and little merry, brown Ruth Wilson who stammered when she

talked fast. Hanging to Ruth's hand was Patsy's small brother, Sweet William, a youngster with mild blue eyes and a mop of fair hair. There were three larger boys, — Patsy Osborne's twin brother Dick, Stephen Tavis, and David Spotswood, the miller's son, who, since his mother's death, made his home with his Osborne cousins.

"C-cousin Dorcas wrote Cousin Polly she's 'l-leven years old," Ruth was saying excitedly. "It seems queer to think she's j-j-just about as old as we are — with all the p-places she's been and all that's happened to her."

"Granddad says he's heard tell that the folks she lives with are rich as cream and no kin to her," said Steve.

David explained. "They adopted her. She was an orphan and all alone. I'm a half orphan but she's a whole one and —"

"Doesn't it seem queer to live with strangers, many kinspeople as there are?" Dumpling said.

“But she didn’t know about us, or our being cousins or anything,” said Patsy. “Her mother was dead, and she was living with her uncle in New York, and they went on a steamship together and her uncle disappeared and then some kind people took care of her.”

“And she lives in Washington where the President stays, and she’s been across the ocean,” said Dick in an awe-struck voice.

“J-j-just think !” Ruth’s words came pell-mell. “She went to a school in Paris where the p-people t-t-talk French every day.”

“And she’s had whooping-cough,” announced Sweet William. “And I had whooping-cough, too. Daddy brought me candy ever’ day. I think I going to whooping-cough again.” He tried to manufacture a cough and looked aggrieved when the other children laughed.

“Cousin Giles, do you know our little new cousin, Anne Lewis, that’s coming to stay at Larkland ?” asked Dick.

Mr. Spotswood shook his head. "I knew her mother twenty years ago when she was pretty little Anne Mayo. And now she's dead and her daughter's coming to The Village." He quoted a line from Horace as he resumed his work of filling a meal bin.

"I wish she'd come," said Patsy, impatiently. "I never saw any girl that's been across the ocean —"

"And went to school in Paris where everybody talks French," said Ruth.

"And lives in Washington," said Dump-ling.

"And is adopted by strangers, like children in story-books," said Dick.

"Why is she coming to stay with Cousin Mayo and Cousin Polly?" asked David.

"Are they more her cousins than the rest of us?"

"Just the same kin," said Mr. Spotswood. "And why Black Mayo was asked to take charge of her — Black Mayo of all people in

the world to have care of a child ! Of all the strange, absurd, unfit things !”

“Cousin Polly’s g-going to have a party for her,” said Ruth. “It’s Thursday.”

“It’s a cousins’ party,” explained Patsy, with a side glance at Steve who was not invited ; “the other kind — friend parties — are pleasanter, but I reckon Cousin Polly doesn’t know about them.”

“Son,” said Mr. Spotswood, turning toward David, “I’d like some one to go to the Andersons. They didn’t send to mill Saturday. I’m afraid they are scarce of corn. Or some one’s sick. Jake was puny all last year and he had a short crop. I’ll borrow Rob Roy for you to ride. Philip’ll not be back from The Village till after mail time and he’d rather his horse would be doing a neighbor a good turn than standing idle. Will you ride over there ? Or do you want to wait and see this new cousin ?”

“I’ll go, father,” said David, eagerly.

"Let me go now. I'd rather ride Rob Roy than see a hundred girl cousins."

"Just carry along this bushel of meal, in case Jake needs it," said Mr. Spotswood. "Tell him I'll take extra toll out of his next crop."

Off David trotted with the meal. The other children settled down on a pile of bags at the sunny south door and begged Cousin Giles to tell them a mill story.

"Why, you've heard them all, over and over," objected Mr. Spotswood.

"Yes," agreed Sweet William, to whom this seemed no reason at all for not telling them again. "Begin with the 'way-back grandfather that built the mill."

"Was he Anne's grandfather, too?" inquired Patsy.

"Yes. He was the same kin to Anne's mother that he was to me," said Mr. Spotswood. "His son was the Colonel Osborne who was General Washington's friend. Colonel Osborne was an old man living

at Larkland when the great flood came and —”

“Let me help tell ’bout that ; let me help,” said Sweet William, eagerly. “It rained and it rained and the water rose and kept on rising. And — and — what comes next, Cousin Giles ?”

“The mill men carried the corn and wheat and flour and meal upstairs, but the water came up there. And then they carried the grist up the ladder into the loft, and the water came up there. And then men came in boats over the treetops —”

“I ’member, I ’member now. I knew it but I just couldn’t think of it,” interrupted Sweet William. “And they carried the mill men out through the windows, didn’t they ? And the water kept on rising, till they could just see the tiny tiptop of the mill. Then the water stopped rising. Then it went down. Let me show you how high it went. Don’t you show me.”

The story ended, as it had ended often

before, with the children's going out to look at the silver plate set in the gable, to mark the height of that record-making flood.

"It is hard to realize," Mr. Spotswood spoke more to himself than to the children, "that such a flood of waters ever came down Tinkling Water — little Tinkling that in every drought leaves me without water to turn the mill." He looked up and down the pretty little stream that, like Tennyson's brook, 'fretted its banks with many a curve' as it gloomed and glanced along. "Why, isn't that — is it — who is that, going up the hill?" he said, looking at two men who had crossed Tinkling Water a little below the mill and were walking quickly up the hill.

"It looks like Cousin Rodney," said Patsy, "with some one — some one I don't know."

"It is Cousin Rodney," said Dick. "And I saw him down there yesterday."

"Where?" asked Mr. Spotswood, looking worried.

“Near Ivy Bluff. Just below where Tayloe Creek runs into Tinkling.”

Mr. Spotswood looked still more disturbed. “I heard—” he said, “I wonder if it can be true that—” he frowned and stopped. “Oh, I wonder—” he said.

“What’s the matter, Cousin Giles?” asked Sweet William. “Are you tired waiting to see the new cousin? I do wish she’d come.”

CHAPTER II

ANNE LEWIS, so eagerly expected at the mill, was on her — it must be confessed — unwilling way to her new cousins. Sitting beside her adopted father, Mr. Patterson, she was staring out of the car window, while he glanced over a newspaper. One mile and another and another went by, — houses, villages, streams, wooded hills, brown fields, wheat and clover lots growing bravely green under the March sunshine.

Anne watched the changing scene with mild interest till they came to a little old yellow house at the edge of a village. Two or three small children were playing in the yard, and at the window stood their mother, with her arm around a girl about Anne's age. Swinging on the gate, was a boy with a base-ball cap set on the back of his

head, — just like Pat, thought Anne. Dear brother Pat whom each mile left farther behind in Washington !

“Oh !” she said ; “oh, dear !”

Mr. Patterson dropped his newspaper and looked down at Anne. Then he put a gentle finger under her chin and tilted her face upward for inspection.

“I’m not crying, daddy dear,” she hastened to assure him, snuggling into the shelter of his arm. “I’m not going to cry. I told Aunt Sarah I wasn’t. Peggy said I couldn’t; she believed I had emptied all my tears. I ought not to want to cry. I’m going to visit cousins — such a pretty place, Cousin Dorcas says — and there are children, a girl about my age, to be my specialest friend. I s’pose it will all be lovely.” She was trying bravely to comfort herself but her voice faltered. She pressed her cheek against Mr. Patterson’s shoulder and asked, “You say it’s the station after this, the very next station ?”

“Yes,” he answered with a caress. “Was that what you were thinking about, with such a sober face?”

“Partly,” she confessed; “partly — other things.” She could not tell him about the little yellow house. It made a lump come in her throat just to remember it. But she tried to think of something to keep him from returning to his newspaper. “Do — do you think it’s going to rain?” she asked. “It doesn’t look like it now, but —” a cough cut short her sentence.

“Well, well! There, dear, there!” Mr. Patterson patted her on the back. “My poor little girl! Never mind. Summer’ll be here before we know it. And we’ll have you at home again, fat and rosy.”

Anne tried to joke. “How fat do you want me? With a double chin, like Mrs. Callahan’s? — Oh, it’s such a so-long time! Nearly all of March; then all of April and all of May and so many days in them. And then June — oh, daddy dear, am I to have

a birthday, all lonesome, in that old Village full of strangers ?”

“Indeed not,” he comforted her. “The longest-winded school will be out by the middle of June. You shall have a home-folks birthday, with a party. And I’ll give you — give you — You decide what you want for a birthday gift, little daughter ; and whatever it is, you shall have it, if it’s in my power to get it.”

“Redville !” sang out the porter. The train jolted around a curve and slackened its speed.

“It seems like we’ve been coming ever so long — but, oh, we got here so soon, after all.” Anne sighed.

Mr. Patterson gathered up the hand luggage. “Fasten your coat collar, dear,” he said. “I’m afraid going out in the cold air will set you coughing.”

And so it did. Poor little Anne coughed till she was red-faced and teary-eyed, and Mr. Patterson dropped his travelling-bag

to pat her on the shoulder, saying, "There, there, there!"

"Hm! A dose of mental science soothing syrup," murmured a soft, grave voice. The speaker, a gentleman in rough clothes, took both Anne's hands in a cordial grasp, and smiled down at her sober face. "I am your cousin, Mayo Osborne," he said, — "for I take it, you are my little cousin, Anne Lewis, who is to honor us with a visit. How do you suppose I knew who you were?"

Anne answered shyly that she didn't know.

"Our cousin Dorcas Read asked me to meet you and Mr. Patterson," Mr. Osborne said gravely. "Now, it is a great responsibility to meet a young lady that you've never seen, so I put on my thinking-cap. I knew that you had whooping-cough in the winter and as soon as I heard you bark I said to myself, 'She's the whooping-cougher.' And I was right, wasn't I?"

"Yes, cousin." Anne smiled as she agreed.

"I had another reason," he went on solemnly. "It was rather a good reason. The telegram said you and Mr. Patterson would come on this train. Now, you two were the only passengers that got off. Wasn't it clever of me to infer that you were you?"

Anne laughed outright. Somehow, she had expected this new cousin to be like their good, worried, dismal Cousin Dorcas and he was delightfully different. His soft, dark, disorderly hair framed a clear-cut face with dark, droll eyes that twinkled and laughed when the rest of his face was sober. And he was so ready with pleasant, whimsical nonsense! Having brought sunshine to Anne's clouded face, he turned to talk with Mr. Patterson. That gentleman explained he had made the journey to Redville only to see Anne safe with her cousins and he must return home on the next train.

"Oh, no, no, no! You must come to Larkland," urged Mr. Osborne, hospitably. "We'll try to persuade you to spend several days with us. At least, you can stay a day or two."

Mr. Patterson regretted that he had to be in Washington the next morning to keep a business engagement. "We — my sister-in-law and I," he said, "left the correspondence to you with Miss Read, your cousin and Anne's. I guess she wrote that the child has recovered slowly from whooping-cough. Now, my sister-in-law is laid up with rather a severe attack of grippe. The doctor doesn't wish Anne to be much in her sick-room and Sarah worries over the child's being left to servants.

"Dr. Mayhew urged us to send her to the country. We thought of letting her go to her old home and running wild with the good folks there. But she is behind in her studies — that's not her fault; she's bright," Mr. Patterson hastened to ex-

plain, "but she's had irregular schooling and now we are anxious to have her lose as little time as possible. Miss Read thought your home would be the best place for Anne — with cousins — in the country — near a good school."

"There's not a better teacher in the world than our cousin, Mrs. Wilson," Mr. Osborne said. "For fifteen years, she's been teaching all The Village babies their A B C's and preparing all the boys and girls for college."

"Ah? That's good. For personally, we didn't know just the place for Anne," said Mr. Patterson. "We didn't want to send her to a boarding-school. She needs school, of course. But first of all, we want her to have a home. She's had too many homeless years. It's good of you to take her."

Mr. Osborne put this aside with a gesture.

"And we respect Miss Read's desire to have Anne — whom I regard as my own

little daughter — know her parents' kinspeople."

"We lost track of the child after she went to New York," said Mr. Osborne. "The cousinship is remote and Carey Mayo — poor, money-seeking wretch! — never cared to keep up the connection. Cousin Dorcas Read's letters gave our first tidings of Anne since her mother's death. We are hoping you will let us take her now — to keep, I mean."

"Never!" said Mr. Patterson, with energy. "Why, I tell you, I look on the child as my own dear little daughter. And we have a legal claim; her uncle, who was her guardian, formally left her to the care of my sister-in-law."

"I am sorry," answered Mr. Osborne, "and her other cousins who do not see you will be sorrier than I am. Well, we are glad to have her lent to us this spring. And we'll do our best for the child, I assure you — my wife and I."

"I am sure you will. As for a child of your own."

"Yes." The answer was grave and curt.

As Mr. Osborne and Anne jogged along the muddy road, he told about the colt, and the spotted calf, and the fowls that were such pets with his wife who was her cousin Polly. But there was no word about the children whom Cousin Dorcas had mentioned and they were what Anne most wanted to hear about.

"You just have one little girl?" she asked at last.

"Had. Yes," her cousin answered briefly. The eyes that had been smiling on her clouded and there was a little silence; all at once, he seemed very far away. Was — was his little girl dead? Anne wondered, as she looked across the sunlit fields.

A moment later, Mr. Osborne's eyes followed her intent gaze. Then he smiled again and spoke. "What do you think of that place back there, the one with big oaks and boxwood walks?"

“I — I didn’t see it,” Anne confessed.

“Didn’t see it?” he chuckled. “Well, well, well! Why, you were staring so hard I thought you were looking through those weather-beaten doors at the cat beside the fire. I was just going to ask whether she was a gray cat or a tortoise-shell. And now — ” he went on in a dismal tone — “I’ll never know. Never.”

In spite of herself, Anne laughed and then he beamed down at her. He was very tall and she was very short, but he had a companionable way of curving his spine and bringing himself to her level and then jerking up straight, like a jack-in-the-box.

“There’s one good thing about not knowing,” he proceeded to console himself. “I can pretend that cat is a tortoise-shell. Now, if you’d seen her — if you positively knew she was gray — I should have to give up. But, after all, it would be a pity for her to be a tortoise-shell. For then I should be a very wicked man. I should

break the tenth commandment. Do you happen to know what that is?" he demanded suddenly.

"Of course." Anne nodded emphasis, looking both amused and puzzled. "But why should you covet your neighbor's cat when you can just as well have one of your own? Are they scarce here? There are so many cats in Georgetown! I'll write and ask Mrs. Callahan to get you one out of her alley. It might be tortoise-shell. I can't exactly promise."

Mr. Osborne shook his head mournfully. "Thank you, little cousin, but that wouldn't do at all. I can get a cat all right. I can't keep one. They'll not stay with me. I mean, they'll not go about with me. Now, a dog would. A dog'll follow his master to the ends of the earth. And a cat won't leave her corner for him. But I love cats. And I don't care a — ahem! — I am not fond of dogs."

"Couldn't you get fond of dogs?" sug-

gested Anne. "It's so easy to get fond of any one — anything, I mean — that you're with !"

Mr. Osborne bent himself to her level and looked at her earnestly. Then he manufactured a tremendous sigh.

"Oh ! You're that abomination of all abominations to me, a good example-setter. Ah ! but I'll not be exampled and reformed. If a cat won't go with me, I'll go alone. I love to see new scenes. I love to hear queer jargons. I love to look in strange faces. I want to know, really know, the bigness and wonderfulness of this big, wonderful world." He began in whimsical jest but his voice grew earnest. Then with a sudden change of manner, he laughed in her eyes. "I go and go," he said, "and then — then I come home. I'll tell you — as a great secret — what brings me back. It's my wife's great-grandmother's mahogany furniture. She can't take that, and she can't go without it. So I go —

and come — and go again. Bless the child! Am I puzzling her to death? She doesn't understand a word of my nonsense."

"Oh," protested Anne, "it doesn't matter about understanding. I like to hear you talk."

"We are getting near Larkland now," said her cousin. "We can see it from this hilltop, until the summer foliage hides it. There! to the left. At the bottom of the hill, by that stream — that's Tinkling Water — is the Larkland mill. It was built before the Revolution by one of our 'way-back grandfathers. You see those houses among trees on the hill beyond? That's The Village where you'll go to school."

"Cousin Dorcas told me about it but I thought it was a town," said Anne. "It looks like grown-up country."

"That's all it is, — sociable, grown-up country," said her cousin. Then he gave her a history of the neighborly little place which for over a hundred years had been

called The Village. Where it stood, there had cornered three great plantations, grants from his majesty George II. The Wilson estate was called Broad Acres, the Osborne place was Larkland, and the Mayo place was Mattoax. More neighborly than most southern planters, the three settlers had built their houses near together. Long ago the great plantations had been carved into half-a-hundred farms, but in the little village which their forefathers had founded still lived Wilsons and Osbornes and Mayos.

“They’re all cousins, from first to fortieth,” said Mr. Osborne, “and they all count in Virginia. So to be on the safe side, you say ‘cousin’ to everybody you meet in the road. You’ll hit it right, nine times out of ten.”

As Mr. Osborne talked, the roan mare picked her way downhill toward the mill, set in a grove of great white-stemmed sycamore trees. Anne, turning to look at the quaint old water-wheel, heard a shrill little

voice call out, "There she is, there she is, *there* she is! I saw her first."



"THE ROAN MARE PICKED
HER WAY DOWNHILL
TOWARD THE MILL"

"Hush, hus-sh, Sweet William; she'll hear you," chided Patsy.

"L-l-look, Patsy; oh, Dumpling, l-look at her," stammered Ruth. "Isn't sh-she l-little?" In their excitement, the

children raised their voices and every word went to Anne's ears.

"Make yourself small, Dumpling, and give me room," said Dick. "I want to see her, too."

"She — she's just like other folks," said Sweet William, with a droll air of disappointment which called forth a titter from the other children.

After the first glimpse of the strangers with staring, curious faces, Anne had fixed her eyes on the road ahead of her. Her cheeks were burning and there was a lump in her throat.

"There are some of your cousins at the mill," said Mr. Osborne. "Suppose I leave you to get acquainted with them, while I drive to The Village for the mail? That's the road to Larkland, — there, to the left."

"Oh, please, no! please let me go to The Village," said Anne. "I want to stay with you. There — there are so many of them."

Then she asked with a sudden thought, "Are any of those your children?"

"Oh, no!" he said; after a pause, he went on, "You will like them; of course you'll like Patsy and Ruth, and every one loves Sweet William, and — oh, you'll like them all!"

But as they forded Tinkling Water and drove uphill, Anne was saying over and over to herself, "They laughed at me. They laughed at me and I don't ever want to see them again, not ever. They're horrid and I'm not going to like them at all."

Cousin Mayo interrupted her unpleasant thoughts. "Here is The Village. It begins, as a proper village should, with a church."

He pointed to an old red-brick building with a tall white spire. Beyond it, set among lawns and gardens along The Street, were a dozen weathered wooden buildings and red-brick mansions. At one place, The Street gave promise of dividing into

two, but the lower loop, around Court House Square — on which were the blacksmith shop, a basket-maker's shed, and two or three cabins — never attained any more dignified name than The Back Way. The Court House, a stately brick building, stood alone in a square shaded by noble oaks. In front of the Court House was a rambling old tavern, flanked by two shops in one of which was the post-office.

I have taken you through The Village — you see it isn't much of a journey — that you may the more readily go about the place with Anne and her friends.

When Mr. Osborne drove to the post-office, the half-dozen men loafing there brightened as if the sun had suddenly broken through clouds. After he got his mail, they detained him to exchange greetings and tell jokes. But when he heard Anne's cough — all the more violent for her having tried to choke it back — he ran down the steps, two or three at a time.

“Bless me,” he said, “I ought to have taken you straight home. Why, I forgot you are a whooping-cougher. What would Polly say to me? — Get up, Rosinante; get up, I say.”

They hurried along the highway to the mill where they took a plantation road that led up a rocky, wooded hill and along the edge of a wheat field. Before them lay Larkland. The mansion was a rambling, low building with dormer windows and shingled roof. Its outbuildings — tobacco barns, cabins, stables, carriage-house, dairy, smoke-house, pigeon-cote, and kitchen — made a little settlement around it.

Anne had a full view of the place as her cousin drove to the side gate. She looked eagerly about for the children, but no one was in sight except a ragged negro boy who took the horse. Mr. Osborne guided Anne along a flagged walk across the greensward, to the house, and into a large, sunny, orderly room.

“Polly, here is our little cousin, Anne Lewis,” he said.

A lady, who was picking withered leaves from the geraniums at the south window, turned and came to greet Anne.

“I am very glad to see you, my dear,” she said. “Aren’t you cold? Let me take off your wraps. — Mayo, I expected you back an hour ago. Where is Mr. Patterson?”

The prim little voice seemed to take up each word and lay it down, like a block, in its proper place. The speaker was small and fair and neat with the kind of neatness that made Anne realize that her own dress was mussed, her shoes muddy, and her hair disordered by the wind.

Mr. Osborne chatted a few minutes and then went out. He was going to the mill, he said. “Giles says he wants to talk over something with me. He looked worried. So I’ll go right away and see what it is.”

Mrs. Osborne took off Anne’s wraps,

settled her in a big rocking-chair beside the fire, and carried her muddy coat to be brushed. She reappeared promptly, not hurriedly — she never seemed in a hurry — when Anne began to cough, hung a quilt on the chair-back to keep off drafts, pulled off Anne's boots, put on warm slippers, and brought a hot spiced drink.

After tea, Cousin Mayo, seeing Anne gaze earnestly at the brown old volumes in the book-case, asked if she liked to read and selected a book for her. It was *Pilgrim's Progress*. Anne examined the quaint old woodcuts with interest.

"I'd forgot about this," she said. "Mother used to read it to me."

Sitting there in the chimney corner, while Cousin Polly knitted and Cousin Mayo read a book of travels, Anne started with Christian on his journey from the City of Destruction; struggled with him through the Slough of Despond; after being misled by Mr. Worldly Wiseman and reclaimed

by Evangelist, entered the wicket gate and 'knocked over and over' at the House of the Interpreter.

"Anne, my dear," said Cousin Polly's neat little voice, "it is bedtime now."

"Oh, I am not a bit sleepy!" objected Anne, looking wistfully to see what happened after the Interpreter 'bid Christian follow him.'

Anne's room was a cosey, tiny little place with white walls and a muslin-curtained casement window. There was just space for a table, a wash-stand, one chair, and a small bed covered with a blue-and-white, hand-woven spread. On the walls were two pictures, — a colored print of David and Goliath and a fine old engraving of Dürer's *Death and the Knight*.

Anne cuddled down between the sheets that smelled deliciously of lavender. And then she began to wonder and wonder again about the children. Cousin Dorcas had said positively that there were children, —

two or three boys and a girl about Anne's age. Had they all gone away — to school or visiting? Anne tried to hope so, but she couldn't make herself believe it. Somehow, Larkland didn't seem a place where children belonged. But Cousin Dorcas said positively — Were they all dead? Anne remembered Cousin Mayo's clouded eyes as he said "had" when she asked about his little girl. Clearly, she must not ask any more questions. But it was puzzling.

And Cousin Dorcas said Cousin Mayo had fair hair. Why, he was dark as a gypsy. It was very puzzling. Anyway, she was glad that girl wasn't one of the horrid children at the mill. And her name was Pocahontas. But they didn't call her that. She had a nickname. It was — was —

Cousin Polly, coming to see that Anne was comfortable, found her fast asleep.

CHAPTER III

PERHAPS you have forgotten, as Anne herself soon forgot, that at The Village post-office she had had one of the paroxysms of coughing which come months after whooping-cough. But she was to be reminded of it, for tidings of what happened at The Village post-office at mail time was carried to every house as surely and almost as promptly as if a town-crier had proclaimed it. That evening, every one in The Village knew that Anne Mayo's little orphan daughter was at Larkland and that she had a most distressing cough.

The next morning at the breakfast table, two packages were handed to Mrs. Osborne. One was from Mr. Blair, who kept the little shop in a corner of which was the post-office, and the other was from his wife.

“Why, what's this?” Mrs. Osborne

looked up with mild reproach, from the note that came with the packages. “‘Anne coughed so dreadfully at the post-office yesterday’ — You didn’t tell me that, Mayo.”

Her husband looked like a big school-boy caught in mischief. “Didn’t I?” he said. “Oh! — no. I didn’t want to worry you.”

“Hm! Well, Will Blair heard her and he has sent a bottle of cough syrup. He says it’s highly recommended and we may as well try it. Alice put in a package of hoarhound candy. She says it’ll be good for Anne and will take away the taste of the medicine.”

The sweetish cough syrup was not disagreeable and, as Cousin Polly gave with it a liberal portion of the candy, Anne thought that it was rather nice to have cousins who were so considerate about giving medicine. But she was soon to change her mind.

The sitting-room had just been put in its morning order — if anything can be fairly

said to be put in order which is never in disorder — when Miss Fanny Morrison came in. She was one of the Morrison ‘girls’ — as they were still called in spite of their graying hair — who lived in one of the weather-beaten houses of The Village. Miss Fanny was the fat one with the crooked nose.

She did not have time to take off her bonnet, she told Mrs. Osborne. She had a bedquilt in the frame. But she couldn’t settle down to quilting until she did something for the poor child that had such a cough.

Had Anne had it long? she wanted to know. Was there consumption in the family? What did her father die of? Did he leave much property? Dorcas Read ought to have given more information about the people who had adopted the child. Well, here was some onion syrup. There wasn’t anything better for loosening a cough than onions baked with sugar.—

And, dear ! wasn't Anne like her mother when she was a child ?

Mrs. Osborne thanked Miss Fanny and set the dish on a side table.

"Here, give me a spoon," said Miss Fanny, briskly, "and I'll measure her a dose. — Open your mouth, child. Mercy on us ! Why are you making such a wry face ? It isn't so bad."

Anne wanted to declare that she thought the dose very unpleasant indeed, but she began to cough so that she could not speak. Miss Fanny patted her on the back. "There, there !" she said. "That shows how badly you need it. And you might have coughed much worse if you hadn't taken that dose. — Give it to her often, Polly, and big spoonfuls. I'll make another dishful before this is used. Now, I must get back to my quilting."

An hour or two later, Mrs. Osborne, looking out of the window, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“Well, I declare,” she said, “if there isn’t old Steve Tavis !”

An old man, with a heavy, good-natured face, stamped noisily into the room.

“Howdy, little gal, howdy,” he said in a high wheezy voice. “Morning, Mis’ Osborne. I just come to bring this here box o’ lozenges for the little gal. After I heard her cough yistidday, I couldn’t rest easy till I come to see ’bout her. These is mighty good lozenges. I take ’em for ticklin’ in my throat and they cure it every time. Stands to reason they are good for a cough, too. Here, sissy, you take one right now.”

He opened the box and held it toward Anne. There seemed nothing to do but to take a lozenge and put it in her mouth. With those keen, kind eyes fixed on her face, she could not even grimace over the bitter little tablet.

“You can take ’em any time,” he said, “two, three, four right along. They aint goin’ to hurt you.”

“Yes, Mr. Tavis, thank you,” said Anne, helplessly.

He smiled down at her, then fumbled in his pockets and brought out a bag of candy. “I reckon you’re a good little gal,” he said. “I always reckon little gals is good less I know they aint. And all the good little gals like candy. So I brought you this. I hope you goin’ to be well soon.”

“Thank you, Mr. Tavis,” said Anne, more cheerfully. “I’m well now.”

“Aint that lozenge cured you quick?” he said, smiling broadly. “Now, Mis’ Osborne, if there’s anything, any time, I can do for this child, don’t you fail to call on me. A child that aint got no father and no mother—it’s bad off without one—but when she aint got neither—well—then it’s everybody’s business to do for her, aint it, ma’am?”

He was so kind that Anne thought of taking another lozenge to please him, but

reconsidered the matter and ate some candy, instead.

As Mr. Tavis went briskly down the road a very small, very black little boy came up the hill.

"Dat's Amos, Sis' Susan's boy," commented Chrissy, the maid-of-all-work, who had come in with an armful of wood. "Mis' Agnes Wilson must 'a' sent him. Dat's her big ol' blue ol' umbrella."



"A VERY SMALL, VERY BLACK LITTLE
BOY CAME UP THE HILL"

"I reckon he has another cough remedy," said Mrs. Osborne.

Instead of one, he had two. Mrs. Wilson had sent the cough medicine that her mother always used and that she kept on hand for her children.

“An’ Miss Nora she axed if I was comin’ up here,” droned Amos, “an’ she tol’ me to gi’ you dis.”

“Dis” was a box with a pencilled note saying that the salve was to be rubbed on the little girl’s chest to prevent the cough from settling there.

Anne watched anxiously while Cousin Polly looked at the salve and smelled the medicine.

“These can wait until to-night,” decided Mrs. Osborne, “and then— Dear me, Anne, these are a great many things for you to use. The syrup and the onion and the lozenges and the salve and this medicine.” She sighed and so did Anne.

It was just then that another visitor came in, a slim boy with great brown eyes and lustrous red-brown hair.

“Why, Richard,” said Cousin Polly, dropping her knitting, “what are you doing out of school? Is anything the matter?”

“It’s recess and mother wanted to send

this — and this,” he produced a note and a bottle, “and I brought them.”

No one would have guessed from his off-hand manner that he had begged to be allowed to come, so that he might see the new cousin.

“Ah ?” said Cousin Polly. “Come and shake hands with your cousin, Anne Lewis. Anne, this is Richard Osborne.” Then she turned to read the note :—

“DEAR POLLY, —

“Last night Mayo informed me that he had seen at the post-office our little cousin, Anne Lewis, who is an attractive child but has an alarming cough. I am sending you a remedy I can recommend most highly. It is the one I always use for my own children. It is prepared according to old Dr. Read’s prescription. You know how remarkably successful he was in his practice with children.

“Mayo would have brought this medicine

to you last night but the bottle had been misplaced and it was bedtime before I found it and so —”

“Of course,” said Mrs. Osborne to herself, glancing around her own prim room with an air of satisfaction. “Miranda has no sense of order. She never knows where anything is.”

Then she finished reading the note and told Dick to wait a few minutes while she answered it.

Now, if Anne and Dick had made friends that morning, Anne might have stayed at home the next afternoon and — But, dear me! then she would not have met another cousin and nothing could have happened that did happen. So you’d better hear just what took place.

Dick said “Good morning,” and Anne said “Good morning.” Then neither spoke again. Dick, with his fists in his pockets, stood staring hard at Anne — not because he meant to be rude but because he was

interested and curious. Anne sat still and looked straight at the fire. She recognized Dick as one of the children she had seen at the mill whom she had resolved, then and there, not to like. It was not calculated to make her change her mind to have him stand and stare, "like I was a piece of wall paper," she said to herself, growing angrier and more embarrassed every minute.

"She needn't be so stuck-up, just because she's been across the ocean and is adopted like a story-book, and all that," thought Dick.

Cousin Polly gave him the note. For a fraction of a second, he caught Anne's eye and — let me whisper this and beg you to remember that he didn't really mean to do it; he just did it, without thinking — he stuck out his tongue and made a horrid, hideous face at Anne. Then, half-frightened and wholly ashamed, he slipped out of the side door and ran home, as fast as his feet could carry him.

Soon after Dick went away, Mr. Osborne came in.

“By the way, Polly,” he said, presently, “you seemed uneasy about Anne’s cough, so I sent word for Doc Read to come over and prescribe for her.”

“I think she has enough prescriptions already,” Mrs. Osborne said mildly. “I don’t think she needs any more. Look there.”

Her husband glanced at the array of boxes and bottles and jars to which she pointed. “Well?” he said inquiringly.

“It seems she coughed at the post-office yesterday and — you know The Village, Mayo, — last night every soul in it knew Anne had a cough and they were all miserable till they had done something for her. All those syrups and lozenges and salves have been sent here this morning for her use. Some people came and dosed her themselves. And — why, she’s been sampling medicines all morning.”

Mr. Osborne leaned back in his chair and laughed till tears came.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said his wife.

"I know you don't, Polly; I know you don't, dear. That makes it all the more amusing." And he laughed again.

"I think it is a serious matter," declared Mrs. Osborne. "We can't hurt any one's feelings by slighting the medicine he's been so kind as to send. Each one thinks his is the very best remedy. And of course I want to do the best I can for Anne. But I don't know — Well, she'll just have to take some of each. And, of course, I mean to have her keep on taking hot spice tea."

"I just have a tag-end of whooping-cough," protested Anne. "Dr. Mayhew said I didn't need medicine — or anything except outdoors. Oh, please, Cousin Mayo, Cousin Polly, I can't take all those things. Don't say I must."

Cousin Mayo smiled at her. "It was very kind of our anxious friends to send these medicines to make you well. Now, Polly," he said, "I am going to take charge of them. If any one asks about them, just say I am giving them as I think proper."

He dumped them all in a box and went out. A few minutes later, he came in, empty-handed.

"I do wish I knew," he said suddenly, "what Rodney Osborne is up to. He's in The Village again — he'll come to tea while he's here, Polly — with that scamp, Jim Chandan."

"A Chandan coming to tea ! a Chandan here !" exclaimed Mrs. Osborne.

"Of course not. Nonsense, Polly ! I was about to say I saw him with Rodney, coming down the path from the Old House Field. Giles said they had been down Tinkling Water. He's afraid they are examining it with a view to —" he stopped and shook his head impatiently.

Mrs. Osborne looked up from her knitting. "With a view to what?" she asked. "What would he do?"

Mayo Osborne shook his rough, dark head more impatiently than before.

"Don't ask me what Rodney Osborne would do. What wouldn't he do?" he said and slammed the door.

While this conversation was going on, Anne had gone to the kitchen to confide to Chrissy her woes about the medicine.

"Dat's all right, honey," said Chrissy, soothingly. "Dat drug-sto' stuff aint gwine to pester you no mo'. Marse Mayo tol' me to th'ow it all in de gulley an' I got it right here in my basket for Sis' Susan. She got a misery in her back an' I 'spec' it'll do her good. Van tuk out one good-smellin' bottle for hi'se'f."

"Oh, I'm glad, glad I don't have to take it," said Anne, much relieved. "But Van — I'm sorry — Is he very sick?"

"Naw'm. Van aint sick at all," said

Chrissy, "but he say dat drug-sto' stuff mought keep him from gittin' sick."

"Oh!" exclaimed Anne. Then she said to herself, "I'll ask Chrissy about Cousin Mayo's children. It 'most seems as if Cousin Dorcas dreamed it—about the girl named Pocahontas, and all. — Chrissy," she said earnestly, "Chrissy, I want you to tell me—"

"Anne!" called Cousin Polly. "Come in the house, dear. Come in at once. It's too damp for you to be out there."

CHAPTER IV

THE next morning, Mrs. Osborne, with a mixing-bowl in her hands, came into the sitting-room where Anne was poring over *Pilgrim's Progress*.

"Anne," she said, "I should like to have you help me awhile. Don't you like to help make cake?"

"I never did it, but I'm sure I'll like to, if you want me," said Anne, following her cousin into the dining-room.

Mrs. Osborne tinkled a little bell that brought Chrissy trotting along the flagged walk from the kitchen.

"Isn't it a pity, Cousin Polly," said Anne, "that your kitchen isn't in the house?"

"A pity!" echoed Mrs. Osborne. "Why, I wouldn't for the world have a kitchen right in the house, where the odors of cooking food would be under my nostrils.

Some people may like to have their kitchens under the same roof as their dwellings, but we are glad to have ours where our mothers and grandmothers had them. We can't improve on their ways and we don't try. — Here, Chrissy," she said, giving Chrissy the bowl, "beat this batter; beat it well; don't just stir it. And bake it in a large square pan."

"Yap'm."

Mrs. Osborne broke some eggs for Anne to beat. Then she measured butter, sugar, flour, and spices for a Dolly Varden cake. She tinkled the bell again.

"Chrissy, bring me another mixing-bowl. And see that you have a clear fire, not too hot."

"Yap'm."

"Anne," said Mrs. Osborne, busily stirring the cake batter, "do you want to know what we are getting ready for?"

"Yes, please, Cousin Polly."

"Well —" The little bell tinkled again.

“Chrissy, put this pan in the stove carefully. And watch your fire. Don’t let it get too hot.”

“Naw’m.”

“But keep it hot enough.”

“Yap’m.”

Mrs. Osborne turned again to Anne. “Well,” she said, “I’m going to have a party for you and invite your cousins, the ones about your age, who’ll be your school-mates.”

“O-oh !” Anne said. Then she asked soberly, “Are — are there many of them ?” She was a shy child and though she made friends readily she always hated to meet strangers. And she had quite positively made up her mind not to like any of the cousins she had seen at the mill — least of all, that horrid boy who made faces at her.

“Let me see.” Cousin Polly began to count. “There are Red Mayo’s three children, Richard, and little William — for if I don’t invite him, Mayo will go for him,

so he may as well come at first — and Patsy — Pocahontas her name is and she ought to be called by it.”

“Oh !” Anne’s eyes widened with surprise. So there really was a girl named Pocahontas and her nickname was Patsy, as Cousin Dorcas said. But that Patsy lived at Larkland. Cousin Dorcas certainly did say that. Was this another Pocahontas-Patsy — or was it the same one ?

While Anne was wondering these things, Cousin Polly was going on with her list. “And David Spotswood. And Ruth Wilson. That’s five. And Alice Blair is seven — no, six. And Agnes Spencer and her sister Amy, and Archibald and John Eppes. Ten. Only ten. It seems to me there’s some one else.”

Ten ! And all of them were strangers, except one. And that one was Richard Osborne, the boy that had made faces at her. Probably the others were just as horrid as he. Anne shivered at thought of the

party, uncomforted by the delicious sandwiches and spicy gingerbread and frosted cake that Cousin Polly was making.

After the food was prepared, Cousin Polly, with a dustcloth in her hand, led the way into the parlor, — Chrissy following with a shovelful of coals to start a fire, and Anne meekly bringing up the rear.

The parlor was a large, low-ceilinged room with four windows draped with darned lace curtains. There was an old square piano, a marble-topped table, a sofa, and some high-backed, hair-cloth chairs ranged against the wainscotted walls. The faded Brussels carpet was patterned with huge bouquets of flowers. Above the high mantelpiece was a long mirror. There were family portraits framed in tarnished gilt.

Anne looked dejectedly around the prim, formal room. "It's a hard room to get acquainted in," she thought to herself. Then she shrank back and seemed to become smaller.

For Cousin Polly was saying, "Your cousins will be interested in seeing you. They have all lived always in ~~The~~ Village. They will like to hear about your journey abroad and the school in Paris that you told Mayo about last night."

Anne's face brightened. Cousin Mayo, she thought, would come to her aid and entertain the dreaded guests. Alas! Cousin Mayo failed her. At dinner, he inquired pleasantly about the party and regretted that he had to go for a new plough.

"I'll try to get back before all the party is eaten up," he said. "Don't look so doleful, Anne," he laughed. "A party is supposed to be a joyful occasion."

It seemed far from joyful to poor little Anne who, at Cousin Polly's bidding, took her book and went into the parlor to watch the fire. Presently, she dropped *Pilgrim's Progress* and sat, with folded hands, staring at the fire. In fancy, she could see the strange cousins — five of them boys —

ranged on those stiff chairs, gazing at her, waiting in awful silence for her to entertain them. At last, she could endure it no longer. She poked the fire which was smouldering and smoking in the long-unused fireplace, then fled to the dining-room.

"Cousin Polly," she said, "the smoke hurts my eyes. I pushed back the fire and the fender is on the hearth. Mayn't I go out awhile to cool my eyes?" She held up her teary red face for inspection.

"You'd better bathe them in salt water," advised Cousin Polly. "Yes, you may go out. Chrissy can watch the fire. But, Anne," she called after the retreating figure, "don't stay long. It's after two o'clock. You must dress soon. Your guests are invited for three o'clock and it would be dreadful for you not to be in place when they come."

The words smote Anne as she went down the steps. She paused, then thought of the ten strange cousins — five of them boys,

one of them the boy who made faces — and hurried on, faster than before. At the gate, she hesitated a moment. Which way should she go? Certainly not along the road where she might meet the coming guests. She took a little path that led downhill. At first she ran along, fearing to hear Cousin Polly's voice call her back, but she grew calmer as she went her way undisturbed. Presently, she came to a spring below which the brook loitered and formed a marsh.

Anne clapped her hands. "Oh!" she said, "I'll play *Pilgrim's Progress*. That little marsh is my Slough of Despond."

It was a favorite game of hers — acting out a story she was reading — and she was deep now in Bunyan's quaint, vivid, beautiful tale. She would be Christian, fleeing from the City of Destruction, going through the Slough of Despond, seeing 'excellent things' in the House of the Interpreter, joining Apollyon in 'sore combat' in the

Valley of Humiliation, imprisoned in Doubting Castle by Giant Despair, refreshed by the 'pleasant prospect' of the Delectable Mountains. What good, great adventures to repeat !

Anne pulled off her cloak, crammed it with broomsedge, and tied it on her shoulders for Christian's pack. Then, a fantastic little pilgrim, she set forth.

The afternoon invited adventure. It was one of March's most lamb-like days. In the air was the wholesome smell of fresh-ploughed land and all the freshnesses and fragrances that spring sunshine draws from the earth. Softened by distance, came the click-clack of the mill. Doves cooed and robins were singing.

Anne went through several fields, scrambling over fences and in and out of the gulleys that crisscrossed the fields. She crossed a stream, climbed a steep hill that she called 'Difficulty,' and entered the pine woods. Among the tall, thick-growing trees, she

lost all sense of direction and wandered on and on. At last, the pine woods gave way to a scattering growth of oaks and hickories.

A little farther on, she came to a cleared space, on one side of which was a little-used path. Following this path, Anne passed three or four old fruit trees and a straggling Lombardy poplar, — signs that this had once been a dwelling-place. All at once, she stopped with a cry of delight. Outstretched before her, was a great bed of jonquils that seemed to catch and hold the sunlight in their chalices. All the beauty of the early spring took form in these flowers that made a glory in the waste, solitary place.

Anne laid gentle fingers on the shining petals and deep, golden cups, as if to discover if they were real or merely a vision of her story, the beauties of the Delectable Mountains.

“Oh, you darlings! you darlings!” she whispered over and over, stroking one blos-

som after another with caressing fingers. "You darlings! 'Way off here by yourselves! God must have planted you."

She plucked the dead weeds from one clump of flowers and then from another and another. Vexing thoughts were forgotten in that fair spot where was no sound except the swish-swish of the pines and the occasional whistle of a partridge.

All at once, there came another whistle from the woods near by — not a bird whistle, but a clear, rollicking, boyish voice. Anne looked around. Up the path was coming a boy, — a sturdy, freckle-faced boy with cap set sideways on his carrot-colored hair. Seeing Anne, he stopped whistling and stood still a minute. Then he came toward her.

"Who are you?" he asked, fixing his hazel eyes on her with frank curiosity.

"I am working my garden." She spoke with dignity to the intruder.

"Gee! But it isn't yours," he said.

“And it’s not a garden. It’s just the Old House Field. I know that. — Who are you ?” he repeated.

Anne resumed her task of removing weeds from among the green spears and shining yellow blossoms. “It’s just as much my garden now I’ve adopted it as if it had been — been born mine. I’ve a right to know. I’m adopted myself,” she said.

The boy whistled. “Oh ! You’re that Anne Lewis — at Cousin Mayo’s ? But she — you’re having a party. Why’n’t you at your own party ?”

Anne worked diligently among the jonquils. It was easier to do that than to answer. But, as the boy stood staring at her, awaiting reply, at last she said : “It’s Cousin Polly that’s having the party. I reckon so. She’ll have to have it herself. I’m not there. It was smoking in the parlor. And the doctor said I was to stay outdoors. It was *not* my party. I don’t know a single one of the inviteds. I

don't want to know them. And Cousin Polly said I had to entertain them."

The thought was so agitating that Anne snapped a jonquil stem and had to stop to pet and pity the broken flower. She worked more slowly as she found berry vines tangled among the jonquils.

"They've lots of little keen thorns," said the boy. "You better cut them." He pulled a knife out of his pocket and handed it to Anne. "I'd dig them up but I promised mother pos-i-tively I would keep my hands clean."

Anne nodded and prodded away at the briars. As she returned the knife, a sudden thought came to her.

"How come — how did you know about the party?" she asked.

"On my way to it," he responded. "I just came 'round this way."

"Came 'round? Why, this is miles and miles away!" exclaimed Anne.

He laughed. "It isn't half a mile. And

about as far from The Village. It's near the mill. That's down there" — he pointed northward — "and Larkland's over yonder" — he indicated the east.

"Why, I thought Larkland was 'way off there." Anne pointed in the opposite direction.

"Oh! you're lost. That way, you'd go to The Village. Which way did you come?"

"I went to the spring and through the Slough of Despond — I mean, the little swamp — and up and down the gulleys and through fields and across a stream and up a steep hill and on through some pines and then through some more woods."

"Gee! you came a roundabout way!" exclaimed the boy. "No wonder you were lost. We better go back by the mill."

"I wasn't thinking about going back yet." Anne resumed her labors more diligently than ever. "I — I — I don't care about parties."

"I don't like the beginnings," the boy

confessed. "That's why I came 'round this way. But — ah — what is Cousin Polly going to have to eat?"

"Sandwiches — egg and chicken salad. And gingerbread. And Dolly Varden cake and pound cake. There's lemonade to drink."

"Is the gingerbread thick, with raisins in it?"

Anne nodded.

"It's time we were going," said the boy. "I reckon they'll wait the party till you get back. You got to go back, you know. You might as well go now."

That was true. She had to go back sometime. It would be easier to go with this boy, who was one of the guests, than by herself, even if she knew the way. First, however, Anne asked a question.

"Did you laugh at me — I mean, were you at that mill Tuesday?" she said.

David stared. "Tuesday?" he said. "Oh, yes. After school. The others waited

to see you. I said I'd rather ride Rob Roy and go to the Andersons'," he explained frankly. "Why?"

"Oh, well — nothing," she said, following him.

"Why are you doing that?" he inquired, as she stopped to break twigs and toss pine boughs in the path.

"So I can find the way back to my garden," said Anne. "I don't want it to get lost again."

"It wasn't lost," said the boy. "We always set our rabbit traps there. A house was there once, long time ago. It burned or tumbled down or something, and the place has gone wild. There are lots more flowers. Those tall bushes are lilacs and the scraggly one is a Japan quince. And there are roses, more than in Mother M'ran's garden —"

"And it's all mine. I found it," breathed Anne, joyfully.

"I told you it never was lost," the boy in-

sisted. "It was you that was lost. Anyway, the flowers'll all be ploughed up soon. Cousin Rodney is going to have tobacco put in that lot."

"He is not! It would be too wicked," protested Anne. "It is so beautiful. Nobody has a right to spoil it."

"He has a right to do as he pleases," said the boy. "It is his land."

"I don't care if it is," said Anne. "Nobody has any right to plough up those lovely flowers — for cigarettes and snuff and chewing tobacco. It's too horrible to think of. It — it can't be true."

The boy laughed. "You are a queer girl," he said. "I wonder what Cousin Rodney would think of that. I dare you to tell him. There he is now." He pointed out Mr. Rodney Osborne, walking beside Tinkling Water, talking to a dingy man in overalls.

Anne, eager and excited about the flowers, quite forgot her shyness. "Why, I will,"

she said. "I'll ask him about it. You say the place belongs to him? And is he my cousin, too?"

David nodded and Anne ran down the hill to meet Mr. Osborne. He was a prosperous-looking, oldish man, bald except for a fringe of reddish-gray hair. He had small features in a large face; Anne thought she had never seen such little keen blue eyes and such a big red face.

Mr. Osborne received with a look of surprise the hand that she laid on his fat palm. "My name is Anne Mayo Lewis," she said, "and I think I'm your cousin and you're mine. If you please, won't you please come up this way? I have something to show you, something lovely that's yours."

She slipped her hand in his so confidently and tugged at his arm so trustingly that Mr. Osborne could do no less than submit to her guidance.

"There!" she said, pausing at the edge of the field.

“Well?” Mr. Osborne looked blankly about him.

“They’re jonquils, you know. Aren’t they the loveliest that ever were?” said Anne. “And please, I want you to say please that they must not be ploughed up. That boy said you were going to have tobacco here,” she explained. “But you didn’t think about the flowers, did you?”

“Why, I didn’t even know they were here,” he said with a slightly bewildered air.

“Of course,” said Anne. “I might have known that. And you’ll not plough them up, will you? You’ll leave them, won’t you? They’re so beautiful and they’re yours.” Her tone made them a rich possession.

“Oh — ah — well!” Mr. Osborne made the promise that Anne so evidently expected. “Well,” he repeated, “they shall not be ploughed up.”

Anne squeezed his hand in her two little ones. “Oh, you are so very good!” she said gratefully.

The man behind Mr. Osborne snickered. ““Good !”” he repeated. ““So very good !’ Oh, my stars !” And he laughed outright.

Anne did not hear him for the red-headed boy was saying urgently, “Come on ; oh, I say, do come on. The gingerbread’ll all be gone from the party.”

He ran down the path and Anne followed, going unwillingly toward the dreaded party and the strange cousins.

CHAPTER V

AS Anne and her companion drew near the mill, they saw Mr. Osborne who hurried toward them with an expression of relief.

“Anne and David!” he exclaimed.

“Anne, where have you been?”

“She was lost. I found her,” David said as Anne was hesitating how to begin her story. “She was in the Old House Field where I went to see about a rabbit trap.”

“Why, how did you get lost, Anne?” asked Mr. Osborne.

“I didn’t exactly get lost,” she explained. “I lost myself. You see, there was the party and —”

Cousin Mayo interrupted hastily. “So you were lost. Well, let’s hurry home. Your Cousin Polly’s uneasy about you and has Chrissy searching the place.”

Mr. Rodney Osborne, who now came down the path alone, detained them a moment.

"Mayo," he said, "this small girl, who says she's a cousin of mine, has made a discovery. She has found some — er — yellow flowers —"

"They're jonquils, the loveliest — oh, I beg pardon for interrupting," said Anne.

"Thank you ! that's it — jonquils, in the field up there where tobacco is to be planted. I have promised her that the jonquils are to be spared. When Van ploughs that field, see to it, will you, that he leaves her flowers. It's just a small place."

"My flowers ?" stammered Anne ; "mine, did you say ?"

"Why, yes ; I am leaving them for you," he said.

"Oh, thank you ; thank you, cousin !" said Anne and gave him an unexpected kiss.

As Anne, David, and Cousin Mayo took the road to Larkland, Mr. Osborne stopped them again.

“Er — Mayo,” he said, “that child is — er — who is she?”

“Anne Lewis, Anne Mayo Lewis. She is Anne Mayo’s daughter,” explained Mr. Osborne. “You remember little Anne that used to visit at Larkland and Broad Acres, when we were boys.”

“Yes; oh, of course,” said his cousin, turning down the road to The Village.

Mr. Spotswood, standing at the mill door, gazed after him with a worried face and then went indoors.

“Why, father didn’t even look at us,” said David, in surprise.

“Poor fellow, poor old Giles!” muttered Mr. Osborne and silently led the way to Larkland.

As they approached the house, Anne looked ruefully at her soiled frock and muddy shoes. “I don’t look very — very partyish,” she said.

“Bless me! that you don’t,” agreed Cousin Mayo. “Oh, well, we’ll fix that.”

He picked her up and put her through the window in her own little room. "You get on dry shoes and stockings and things," he commanded. "I'll send Chrissy to button you up. I'll tell Cousin Polly that I've found you and then come back for you. And I'll tell about your getting lost. You and David needn't mention it."

When he returned a few minutes later, Patsy was with him and Sweet William was perched on his shoulder.

"Anne," he said, "here's one of your many cousins. She is Pocahontas Osborne by name and Patsy by nickname. This gentleman on my shoulder is her brother, Sweet William, who says he is 'most half-a-dozen years old and all-a-dozen sweet.' He is going to help me hand the party around. Patsy, you take Anne under your wing and tell her who the other cousins are."

Anne's resolve to dislike the new cousins melted like snow in sunshine, when she met Patsy's bright, friendly smile. The

two girls sat down on the sofa and munched sandwiches and got acquainted. Presently, Sweet William came and snuggled between them.

"If you let me bite half moons 'round your cake, it'll be lots prettier," he suggested persuasively to his sister.

"Oh, Sweet William," said Patsy, "don't be so greedy. Mother told you to act like a little gentleman at the party. You've had two pieces of cake."

"I think I could eat another piece. I think I could eat 'most two pieces. I'm not full up. See!" Sweet William opened his mouth wide, like a hungry little bird.

"Sh! Cousin Polly will hear you," cautioned Patsy, "and she'll think you haven't any manners. You want to be a good boy, don't you?"

"Um hm, sorter good." He agreed without enthusiasm. "Not too good, so I won't get 'nough cake."

Mr. Osborne, overhearing part of this conversation, brought a plate of cake. "There," he said, pointing to a thick slice, "is what I call a 'greedy-boy hunk.' Do you happen to know —"

"Thank you." Sweet William remembered that much manners as he beamed and helped himself.

Then Mr. Osborne took the children outdoors and led a merry game of prisoners' base. When the game was over, Anne and Patsy wandered off arm in arm.

"Dumpling Blair and Ruth Wilson are my specialest friends," confided Patsy. "And you're going to be. Oh, it's so nice and queer that you aren't different."

"Different how?" asked Anne.

"Oh, just different," said Patsy, vaguely. "You've been so many places and seen so many things that — We were wild to see you. We went to the mill to peep. But we didn't expect to like you. And we were all afraid of you."

“Afraid of me !” echoed Anne in amazement.

Patsy nodded. “And Dick said you were stuck up. Oh, I didn’t mean to tell that. Of course, you had a right to be — all different. But I am so glad you are — just like you are.”

“Dick is —” Anne checked herself, remembering that he was Patsy’s brother.

“You think he’s horrid,” Patsy laughed. “He can be very aggravoking. He is such a tease. But you’ll like him — sometimes. And he has a beautiful voice, like an angel’s. Sundays, he says he’s going to be a hymn-singer like Sankey. But most times, he’d rather be a pirate. He had the west attic room for his pirate den when we stayed here at Larkland.”

“You !” exclaimed Anne. “You stayed here at Larkland ?”

“Why, yes,” said Patsy. “We were living here when Cousin Dorcas visited us. You see, the place belongs to Cousin Rodney

Osborne that lives in Richmond. He wanted father to stay here, but we all got homesick. Cousin Rodney said 'it was very foolish to go back to our little chicken coop where we haven't room to swing a cat.'" Patsy laughed merrily.

"Cousin Dorcas told me about you," said Anne, "but she said Cousin Mayo was your father."

"Cousin Mayo? Why, how could she—" Patsy had looked puzzled but her face cleared. "Oh, I see. Father is your Cousin Mayo, too. Red Mayo Osborne people call him, and this is Black Mayo because he's so dark."

"Oh!" Anne remembered now that Cousin Dorcas had said Mayo was a family name borne by several of the Osbornes and had been careful to put 'Larkland' on her letter, saying the Larkland Mayo had children who would be pleasant companions. "And — and this Cousin Mayo hasn't any children?" she asked.

"No," said Patsy. "Not now. He did have one. She was just a baby when she died."

"Oh !" said Anne again.

"I wish," said Patsy, eagerly, "you had come to live with us. That would be 'most as good as having a sister."

"Perhaps —" began Anne and then stopped, remembering that teasing Dick was Patsy's brother.

"Mother says she can't imagine why you weren't sent to some of us stay-at-homes," Patsy went on. "Cousin Mayo is such a roam-about — here to-day and gone to-morrow. Mother says he's always been that way. When he was a little fellow in dresses, he used to run off and have them hunting him all day. His father said it was the Indian in him. You know, he — you and I, too, all of us, are descendants of Pocahontas from our Mayo kin."

Anne was surprised and delighted to learn that the Indian princess was her far-off

great-grandmother. It was like being kin to Cinderella or Scheherazade.

After all, the dreaded party had been very pleasant. Anne and Patsy said so over and over, as they walked down the hill together.

“And I wish you could come and stay —” Patsy interrupted herself. “Oh, I forgot Old Dog Tray. Mother said be sure not to leave it,” and she darted back to the porch.

“Why, where’s your dog you went back for?” inquired Anne, as Patsy reappeared.

Patsy laughed. “This is Old Dog Tray,” she said, holding out a shabby umbrella. “Mother said it might rain and we’d better bring it. You’ve heard of Old Dog Tray, haven’t you?” and she sang, —

“‘He’s faithful and he’s kind,
And his tail hangs down behind,
And Old Dog Tray’s ever faithful,
He’s faithful and he’s kind,
And his tail hangs down behind,
And Old Dog—’

"This is its tail." She twirled the string which, in place of a strap, fastened the umbrella.



"An umbrella with a name! I never heard of such a thing," exclaimed Anne.

"Oh, mother names our clothes and things after they get so old that they're friends instead of being just store-boughts," Patsy

explained. "It's lots of fun getting suitable names. And it makes them seem like a part of the family. The round felt hat I wear to school is Noll Cromwell and my Sunday one with the feather is Prince Rupert. I hated this old striped cloak till we began to call it The Pied Piper. And father's black coat, since it's threadbare, is Dominie Sampson."

"How lovely ! what fun !" said Anne, and she went back to the house, wishing she had nice old clothes with names to them.

That evening when Cousin Polly went to make sure that the parlor fire was out, Anne looked after her with a doleful sigh.

"And now the trouble is —" Cousin Mayo paused, waiting for Anne to finish the sentence.

"About telling Cousin Polly," she said. "I didn't just get lost, Cousin Mayo. I — I ran away from the party."

"Oh, I knew that !" said Mr. Osborne.

"How did you know ?" inquired Anne.

He was standing by the mantelpiece, filling his pipe. He jerked down to her level and faced her with humorous eyes. "Because — I've done it myself."

"You!" Anne wondered, then she returned sadly to her own case. "And now I must tell Cousin Polly."

"She made the party for you," remarked Cousin Mayo. "She took a great deal of trouble about it. She thought you would enjoy it."

"I did enjoy it," said Anne. "People are mighty nice after you get acquainted. But, oh, dear! it's so scarey to have to get acquainted. I thought the party was going to be dreadful, and it was lovely."

"Well," Mr. Osborne said hastily as his wife crossed the hall. "Isn't that enough? Tell her it was nice. Say you enjoyed it."

Anne flashed a grateful glance at him and met Cousin Polly with a kiss. "It was so good of you to make a party for me!" she exclaimed. "We had a glorious time."

I like my new cousins. And I never tasted such good gingerbread.”

Cousin Polly looked gratified. “I am glad you enjoyed it,” she said. “It was a lot of trouble. I was just thinking it was too much trouble, but it wasn’t if you enjoyed it.”

Anne gave her an impulsive hug.

“I haven’t had time to ask about your getting lost,” Cousin Polly said, smoothing her dress which Anne had crumpled. “How did it happen? And where did you go?”

Anne told briefly.

“You ought to have sat on the porch or walked about the yard till your eyes felt better and then come in,” said Cousin Polly. “It was silly to roam off that way.”

“It was so beautiful,” Anne apologized.

“It was so muddy and briery. There’s plenty of room to play in the yard and garden. Why, if David Spotswood hadn’t come along how would you have found your way home? You might have got hurt or something dreadful might have happened.”

Mr. Osborne's eyes laughed down at Anne. "In the long ago," he said, "people believed the world outside their small corner was inhabited by strange monsters, fierce creatures waiting to destroy those who ventured too far. Your Cousin Polly" — with an affectionate, teasing smile at his wife — "inherits that belief and hates the world outside the garden gate. But" — his jesting voice grew earnest — "always there were some gallant adventurers, some reckless vagabonds, who widened the horizon. I'll read you what one of them says. Oh, Tennyson's *Ulysses* captures the spirit of it!" he said, taking a book from the shelf. Suddenly he glanced at his wife busy with her knitting. "Ah! how could you like it, my Penelope?" he said and threw aside the book. — "How did you come to make friends with Rodney Osborne, Anne?" he inquired presently; "and ask him about those flowers? and he grant your request?"

"I — just told him about them," said

Anne. "I knew he couldn't want them ploughed up. Oh, and isn't he kind and good?"

"Kind! good!" echoed Mayo Osborne. He stared at Anne a long minute; then he doubled and shook with laughter.

"Why, why, what —" stammered Anne, looking puzzled and uncomfortable.

"Please excuse me," said her cousin. "It is just — just a — a fit. I have them sometimes. And so you've found out, on this short acquaintance, that our cousin Rodney is very kind and good?" In spite of himself, his voice quivered with suppressed mirth.

"Why, yes," Anne answered readily. "Of course. It takes a very generous person to give away those beautiful jonquils, and to a new cousin that he never saw before."

"O — oh! I see. I see," he said thoughtfully.

"Why, my dear child, you ought to know —" began Mrs. Osborne.

“Pardon me, dear,” interrupted her husband. “Doesn’t Anne — bless her little heart! — know all we ought to tell her?”

“Cousin Mayo,” Anne said after a pause, “David calls the flower place the Old House Field. I don’t like to call it that. I wish it had a pretty name, one that fits and is beautiful enough.”

“Change its name,” suggested her cousin. “It is on the edge of Larkland, next to Broad Acres, so you can call it either. Though I’ve never seen any larks there and it isn’t broad acres — just a little place, only big enough,” he smiled, “to be your happy acres.”

Anne clapped her hands. “Happy Acres!” she exclaimed. “That’s it. Happy Acres! Isn’t that a dear, suitable, loving name? And, oh, the good times we are going to have there!”

CHAPTER VI

A DAY or two later, Anne wrote a partnership letter to Mr. Patterson, Miss Drayton, and Pat. It was a long letter and Anne spent much time over it, chewing her pencil and twisting the lock of hair that Pat called her 'thought lock' because she always pulled it when she was studying or thinking hard. This is the letter which was finished at last.

"MY DEAR HOME FOLKS, —

"I am at the place you sent me to but I am not with the people you sent me to. They have separated. The place is here and the people are at The Village. You will have to write me which you want me to be with. I hope it will be here at Larkland. This cousin is another Mayo Osborne that they call Black Mayo, and the Cousin

Mayo with the children that they call Red Mayo has moved back to The Village.

“I would like to be there with Patsy but I want to stay here with Cousin Mayo. I would not like to be there with Dick.

“I like this place very much. Cousin Mayo says he is glad to have me and he looks glad. Cousin Polly says she is glad. I think she is and she just isn't a glad-looking lady. She lets me help feed the chickens. She gives me medicine that does me good. It is very mean. She gives it to me every time I cough. I hold my breath and my cough doesn't come out often. I think it will be well very soon. I am to start to school as soon as Cousin Polly thinks I am well enough.

“There is a book-case full of books and the kitchen is outdoors. The cook is named Chrissy. She brings hot cakes in a deep plate covered up with another plate. They are thin, brown corn-cakes with lacey edges. There are two boys at the other

Cousin Mayo's. One is a boy that teases you and makes faces. I do not like boys that tease."

This was carefully interlined, "except Pat that I love."

Then the letter went on: "Daddy dear, I am going to wait till birthday-time to say about my present. I thought three or four times I had decided but I have changed my mind, so I am going to leave it room to change again.

"I think a ring would be nice, one with a red set, that I could turn on my finger to remember things by. A kitten would be nice. Cousin Mayo says, now I am here, all the place needs is a cat in the other corner. He likes a tortoise-shell, but don't you think a maltese with gray, downy fur is pretty? Anyway, it must be one that purrs loud when you rub her.

"I hope you will write soon, and please write I am to stay here, and please write I don't have to take any more cough medicine."

The letter closed with messages to each of the family and to many friends including the cook and the postman. There was a postscript: "Please don't forget to say that about the medicine."

Anne, going to The Village to mail her letter, stopped at the mill. It was a place children found hard to pass without stopping. It was such fun to slide down the great heaps of corn and wheat, and it was so interesting to see the grain put in the hopper and then to watch the thin, warm stream of meal dribble out in the dim, noisy, sweet-smelling room below.

"I didn't know a mill was such a nice place," said Anne, powdering her hair with meal to make herself look like a miller. "You love it, don't you, Cousin Giles?"

"Better than any other place in the world," he said in his deep, earnest voice.

"Was your father a miller, too, Cousin Giles?" she asked.

"Not much. Yes, a very good one. I'm

the first real miller in the family, I believe,” was Cousin Giles’s contradictory answer. He did not explain that his father’s fortune had been lost with the Confederate cause. In the breaking up of the great plantation, the mill had been left to the family. Captain Spotswood, in spite of failing health, had toiled there bravely, till his son Giles grew up. Young Giles wanted to study law with his cousins Rodney and Red Mayo, but his family needed his help. So he wrote on the fly-leaf of an old law-book, “Giles Spotswood, miller,” and tossed it on a shelf to gather dust.

“Is David going to be a miller, too?” asked Anne.

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Spotswood. “I want him to go to college and have his chance. Of course, I’d like him to keep the mill running that has been in our family so long. But now — oh, I can’t be sure about anything.”

“I’m sorry,” Anne said gently, looking

at his troubled face, "about — whatever makes you sorry."

"You see, it's this way, dear," Mr. Spotswood said, touched by her interest; "my water-power isn't good. In dry weather, Tinkling doesn't give water enough to turn that wheel and so my mill is at a standstill, sometimes for weeks. If there were in the neighborhood a good mill able to grind the year 'round, it — well, it would ruin me."

He looked down the stream. There, where Tayloe Creek joined Tinkling Water, a clearing had been made and the foundations of a building were being laid. A mill there would mean — no college for David.

"I'm glad there isn't any other mill," said Anne, comfortingly. "Of course, nobody would build one where it would — would hurt you so, and — Oh, there's Patsy!" she exclaimed, and ran down the path.

From the post-office, Anne and Patsy went

to the other end of The Village, and, just before The Street turned again to a road, they came to a spacious yard dotted with noble oaks. In an open space at the centre, there was a box-edged walk leading up to a brick heap. That heap of bricks had been Osborne's Rest, Patsy's grandfather's grandfather's home. When it had gone up in flames in a war-time raid, Patsy's grandmother had moved — 'to camp,' she said — into the 'office,' a cottage in the yard. Fifty years later, her son and his family were still camping in The Roost, as they called the cottage.

Anne and Patsy, on that sunny March afternoon, settled themselves in the swing for a private talk. Soon, however, they were spied by Sweet William who was playing in the yard. He trudged to the swing, carrying under his arm his special pet and boon comrade, Miss Flora MacFlimsey, a half-grown chicken, skinny and lank and bare of feathers as only a young Shanghai can be.

"Patsy !" said Sweet William.

Patsy did not answer.

"Patsy !"

There was no response.

"Patsy !"

Another pause. His sister chattered on to Anne.

"Patsy !" A fourth time came the sweet, insistent call.

"Oh, Sweet William !" grumbled Patsy. "What do you want ? I'm busy talking to Anne. If I didn't answer, you'd stand there and call 'Patsy' till midnight."

Sweet William thought this over, then announced, "No. No, I wouldn't. I'd go in to supper. Patsy !"

"What ? what ? what ?"

"Emma says Flora MacFlimsey's as naked as she can be. Is she, Patsy ?"

Patsy glanced at the skinny young fowl and agreed with Emma. "I reckon she is."

Sweet William disagreed decidedly. "She isn't. I say she isn't. I know she isn't."

Patsy turned back to Anne, without answering this protest. Sweet William sat down on a gnarled oak-root and was silent a few minutes. Then the girls' chatter was interrupted by the fluttering and squawking of the pet fowl.

"You William Osborne! what are you doing?" Patsy asked impatiently.

Sweet William held up three feathers. "She wasn't as naked as she could be. She's nakeder now."

"Oh, you bad boy! Weren't you ashamed to pull out poor Flora's feathers?"

"There's anudder one."

Patsy caught his fingers. "Don't, I tell you, don't. I'll tell mother, if you pull another one."

"Mudder'll not punish me. She's busy."

"Sewing on my blue dress?" asked Patsy, eagerly.

"Uh no! She's not just sewing. She's busy. She's reading."

Patsy sighed. Sweet William looked as

if he meditated another attack on his fowl. "Miss Flora MacFlimsey don't mind this little pulling," he remarked cheerfully.

"What a queer name your chicken has!" said Anne.

"Why, you know — didn't you ever hear of Miss Flora MacFlimsey?" asked Patsy.

Anne shook her head.

"It's in mother's old reading-book. I said it at school one Friday." Patsy repeated the old verses about the city belle who, with twelve cart-loads of trunks full of Paris finery, protested always that she had 'nothing to wear.' "Sweet William named his chicken 'Coo-chicky' and after she was so slow about feathering Dick named her 'Miss Flora.' Let's let her go now, Billy-boy," Patsy said persuasively. "Shoo, Flora, shoo!"

The skinny fowl fluttered away but when Sweet William called "Coo-chicky, chicky, chick! Coo, Flora!" she flapped back and began pecking at his fat pink fingers.

Patsy laughed. "Come on, Anne. Let's ask mother if I may walk far as the mill with you," she said, leading the way into 'the chamber' which was her parents' bedroom, Mr. Osborne's study, the children's play place, the family sitting-room, and the company parlor.

In this room-of-all-work, Patsy found her mother curled up on the shabby sofa, a sheepskin-covered volume on her knees, a half-finished gingham frock on the floor beside her.

Mrs. Osborne, a merry dark little lady, looked up with an exclamation of surprise, when her daughter spoke. "O-oh! Patsy-pet!" Then she hurried on in a delicious voice that caressed vowels and rippled like a laughing brook, "Why, how comes it you're home so early? School's not out, is it?"

Patsy laughed. "An hour ago. It's after four."

"O-oh! Is it possible? What will you

wear to school to-morrow? I meant to finish your dress this evening. I was sewing on it and I just happened to think of some lines in *The Lady of the Lake*. I couldn't remember the next stanza and I took down the volume and I never came to a stopping place." She glanced ruefully at the unfinished frock, then her eyes fell on the open book and her face lighted. "Listen here, Patsy-pet! You must learn this, the part about Fitz-James's journey with Roderick Dhu as guide."

Anne listened eagerly to the spirited verses, and wanted to know if there were any more as interesting.

"Much more," answered Mrs. Osborne. "Some better — perhaps. It depends on what you read last. The last always seems the best. We enjoy our hour's reading after lessons in the evening, don't we, Patsy-pet? It's sometimes Dickens but oftener Scott."

"Yes," agreed Patsy, "but the summer

days are better. Then we go on till mother's voice gets tired," she explained.

Anne, who dearly loved to be read to, began to think it would be pleasant to live with these cousins. She might write to her home folks and say she wanted to — but there was Cousin Mayo, and Dick was here.

While Anne was at The Roost, Dick came in, followed by David who said grumpily, "Well, he gave us the slip again."

Patsy laughed and explained to Anne. For two or three weeks, Dick had been going off alone after school and coming back about dark. He would not tell the other boys where he went, and David and Stephen resolved to follow him and find out. After being evaded by him several afternoons, they agreed to keep him in sight all day Saturday. He started directly after breakfast and they followed him on a long, rough walk. About noon when they were miles from home, he took a sandwich out of his pocket.

"Sorry I haven't enough to divide," he said, grinning back at his pursuers. "I only brought lunch for one. I am that one."

Suddenly leaving the path, he darted into a thicket of pines and disappeared. There was nothing for Steve and David to do but to trudge home. At sundown, Dick sauntered back and hunted them up to ask whether they had a pleasant walk.

"We'll get even with him yet," growled David, as Anne laughed over this story. "We're going to find out his secret, if it takes us a year."

"Uh no, sonny; no, no, you'll not," crowed Dick. "Whew, I'm cold." He crept up and twitched a hair from David's red head, put it under some pieces of wood, and pretended to warm his hands at a blaze.

"Aw, stop your foolishness," said David, pushing him aside.

What a tease Dick was! Anne was not so sure she wanted to live at The Roost, she thought, as she went back to Larkland.

There she found her cousin Rodney who had come to tea.

“Oh, I am so glad to see you,” she said eagerly. “I wish I had known you were going to be here to-day. I would have brought you one of your jonquils, a new kind I found yesterday, little and so sweet. It’s just right for your buttonhole.”

He smiled. “I wouldn’t recognize myself with a flower on my coat,” he said. “You may have all the flowers in that field.”

“Oo-ee ! oh, thank you !” she exclaimed. “But — I think I ought to tell you — there’s a lilac bush, too, and lots of roses. You wouldn’t be willing to give away all —”

“Every one of them. You may have them all,” interrupted Mr. Osborne.

“Oh, oh !” exclaimed Anne. “I wouldn’t have believed any one could be so generous, would you, Cousin Polly ? Why, if I had those flowers, I couldn’t any more give them all away than —” lacking a fit comparison,

she ended the sentence by looking admiringly at him.

Mr. Osborne would have kissed her if he had ever had any practice in caressing children. With an unaccustomed glow at his heart, he turned from her to discuss business with Mayo Osborne, while Anne settled down in a corner with *Pilgrim's Progress* which was as interesting on the second reading as on the first.

Presently, Mayo Osborne was called out on farm business and Rodney picked up and put down two or three books, walked about the room, looked bored, and finally paused near Anne.

"What are you reading, little one?" he asked, putting up his eye-glasses.

"*Pilgrim's Progress*, where Christian and Hopeful crossed the stile and entered the grounds of a 'castle called Doubting Castle the owner whereof was Giant Despair.'"

Anne quoted the phrase she had just read.

"Ah ! that precious Christian was always

getting into some devilment or other," Mr. Osborne said with an air of satisfaction ; "he wasn't so good, after all, — was he?"

"He kept doing wrong and being sorry and trying to do right again," said Anne. "No-o, he wasn't real, out-and-out, all good, — not like you." She ended with an admiring glance.

"Wh-what do you mean?" Mr. Rodney Osborne actually stammered.

"It seemed so much to give the jonquils — and now all the other flowers, lilacs and roses, too," she said. "Oh, you are so good!"

Mr. Osborne laughed but he looked pleased. "D'you know," he said, "you are a small person of uncommon wisdom and good judgment? Not every one has found out that, about my — ahem! — goodness, I mean. I think you and I are going to be friends. What say?"

They shook hands as seal of a friendship which was to lead to many things not foreseen by either of them.

CHAPTER VII

“**I** DIDN’T know these books were in the world,” Anne said, looking up from *Ivanhoe* one Saturday morning as Mr. Osborne entered the sitting-room. “Mother did, I reckon. The backs of her books looked like these. The Marshalls’ and Aunt Sarah’s are different — all colors and new. I don’t see why people keep on writing new books,” she pondered, looking respectfully at the dingy volumes behind the diamond-paned doors. “There are so many of these interesting old ones.”

Cousin Mayo, who had been rummaging a drawer, now shut it with a bang. “See here, kitten,” he said; “I’m going to carry these bolts to fix Van’s plough. Don’t you want to go with me? He’s ploughing the tobacco end of your Happy Acres. We’ll

take the pruning scissors and get the rose-bushes in shape.”

Anne, perched behind on the roan mare Rosinante, chattered about her first visit to Happy Acres. “I was playing *Pilgrim’s Progress*,” she said, “and that hill was my Delectable Mountains. And when I saw that field of jonquils, it seemed as if the play was real, as if ” — her voice dropped — “God had let that shining field down out of heaven for me.”

“Perhaps He had.” Cousin Mayo’s voice was matter-of-fact.

“Oh !” Anne wondered.

“Why not ?” he asked. “No man tended or cared for them. You don’t think it looks like the devil’s work ? Well, then, who was it but God ?”

“Cousin Polly says there must have been a border of jonquils in the old garden and moles carried the bulbs along their runways. But ” — Anne hesitated — “I’d love to think it was God.”

“Then think it. What Cousin Polly says just puts Him one step farther off. He had to make the bulbs increase, didn’t He, and put the moles there to carry them?”

Mr. Osborne swung Anne and himself to the ground, tied Rosinante to a gnarled apple-tree, and tinkered with the plough. Then, while Van dug up sassafras shrubs and blackberry vines, Mr. Osborne ploughed. It was a pleasure to see him cut straight furrows in the deep, dark soil and swing the heavy plough around the corners, his cheerful voice driving the horses at a brisker gait than Van’s halloos and black-snake whip.

Anne, too, was happily busy; weeding the jonquils, looking at the budding lilacs, and examining the swelling knobs on the rose branches. “I can hardly wait for them to bloom,” she said to herself. “Roses, red and white and pink and yellow. All kinds, David says.”

“What’s that about David?” asked a voice behind her.

“Why, what are you doing here?” demanded Anne, wheeling to face David himself.

“Came for bait,” said David. “Steve and I are going fishing. We were going to follow Dick again, with lunch in our pockets this time,” — Anne laughed — “but he slipped away after breakfast. Emma said she saw him go past the kitchen, with a bucket and a shovel. We’ll try again next Saturday. I’ll never give up till we find out what he’s up to.”

David helped Anne weed the jonquils, looking up often to see if Stephen were coming.

“I might as well get the bait,” David said at last. “I see I’ll have it to do. About the time I’m done, Steve will loaf up and offer to help.”

The bait was dug and still Stephen did not appear, so Anne and David went to look at the rose-bushes.

“Mother M’ran says roses bloom better when they are pruned,” said David. “But

you don't want them to bloom better than these old bushes. Just wait till May and June. There'll be bushels of roses here."

"What kind is that?" Anne asked, pointing at a rank-growing vine with fish-hook-shaped thorns. "How does it look?"

"I don't know. It's just a rose, a white rose," said David who could never describe things.

"Has it dark, glossy leaves and single white blossoms, like stars a dark night?"

"That's it," he agreed.

"I thought so. I thought I knew those thorns. It's a Cherokee," said Anne, eagerly. "It grows at home. And this one with the long stems covered with little brambly thorns?"

"That's yellow."

"What kind of yellow?" inquired Anne.

"I don't know. Just yellow," answered David.

"Jonquil yellow, and blooms early? not very large, not very double, and sweet?"

“Why, yes. How do you know?” asked David.

“Oh, of course. I know that, too. I know it by the stems. I ’spect lots of these are old friends. Isn’t it beautiful to think of what’s shut up inside these brown, thorny stems? roses — red and yellow and pink and white — satiny leaves, and sweet smells. It’s like — only it’s nicer — the genie in the vase that the fisherman found, — in the *Arabian Nights*, you know.”

“What queer things you say, Anne!” said David, with puzzled interest. “It is like that when you come to think of it — but I’d never think of it unless somebody told me.”

“I know something interestinger than roses,” said Stephen’s excited voice.

David turned indignantly. “Oh, you!” he said. “I should think you’d be ashamed of yourself. To ask a fellow to go fishing with you and leave him all the bait to get, and then —”

“David,” interrupted Steve, “I’ve found out Dick’s secret.”

“No !” shouted David, incredulously.

“Yes,” declared Steve.

David gave a whoop and shook Steve’s hand like a pump-handle while Anne clapped her hands.

“What is it ? How did you find out ? What did he say ?” asked David.

“Listen, sonny. Gee ! I’m tired.” Stephen dropped on the ground and fanned himself with his hat. Then he proceeded to tell his story. “I knew there was no use having two people to get a little bait, so I thought I’d loaf ’round till you dug enough” — Steve’s eyes twinkled and David grunted. — “I went to the mill and then up Tinkling Water to Ivy Bluff. I saw a strange bird and while I was sitting still watching it, I heard a noise — something thumping, not far away. And there was old Dick emptying a bucketful of dirt and stones. Then he disappeared behind a bush and

some rocks. You better believe I laid low and watched. Pretty soon he came out, looking 'round careful as you please, and emptied his bucket again. And — listen at the cunning of him — he had scraped the leaves away and was putting the stuff down on the bare ground and covering it with leaves and brush. He'd found a hole there, and he's been working like a beaver to dig it out for a pirate den or treasure cave. Don't you know how he used to be always wishing he had a cave like Ali Baba's?"

"Where was he?" David asked with breathless interest.

"At the bend of Tinkling, beyond our old fishing-hole," answered Steve.

"Why, we've been past that place a dozen times!" exclaimed David.

Stephen nodded. "I wanted to chuck a rock down on his conceited head but I didn't. I waited till he went back in his den and off I crept. We'll fix him. When he's sitting there, pleased as pie with him-

self, we'll storm his den. Or take possession and let him find us there. Oh, we'll fix him!"

"S-sh ! yonder's Dick," said Anne. "Oh, and he's playing pirate now ! Those sticks in his belt for pistols. And that piece of a hoop is a cutlass, don't you see ?" For the first time, Anne looked with friendly interest at Dick, for she, too, liked to 'make believe.'

Dick was following the path at the lower edge of the clearing. Seeing the other children watching him, he tossed aside his pirate outfit and came across the field.

"Where you been, Dick ?" asked David.

"Just out walking for my health," Dick grinned.

"Shucks !" said David. "Don't you want to go fishing with us ?"

"No." Dick's grin spread. "Had enough fishing last Saturday."

"Last Saturday ?" queried Steve.

"Yes. Spent 'most all day fishing for suckers. Caught 'em, too," he chuckled.

The other boys reddened but laughed with him. "Oh, sonny! Your time will come. We'll make you pay for that," threatened Steve.

"So do, sons; so do, if you can," agreed Dick, with provoking good humor. "Gee!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad I came this way. Look at those jonquils."

"Aren't they beautiful?" Anne delighted in their praise. "Aren't they lovely? Such a glorious yellow!"

"Like Spanish gold," said Dick, with a far-away look.

"Like sunshine, I think," said Anne. "It must be lovely here on rainy days when they're making their own sunshine."

"Umph!" grunted Dick and turned his face homeward.

Cousin Mayo came then to say they would prune the roses that afternoon. "And I'll build you an arbor," he said, — "there, where that latticed frame has fallen down — and we will train the climbing roses up its

sides. That will be your reward of merit for doing well in school," he went on, with twinkling eyes. "You're to start to school next week, aren't you? Now, you may not do well. So it is the pleasant part of prudence to give the reward beforehand. When I was a small boy, I wished people would do that way about medicine, — give the honey first, you know, and leave it to me about taking the medicine afterward."

Chatting pleasant nonsense, they rode home by way of the mill to get some popcorn Mr. Spotswood had promised Anne.

"I've found out more about that matter," the miller said, looking at the frame of a building a little distance down Tinkling Water. "Jim Chandan told Harris he's coming up here. He had a mill below Broad Rock, you know; people thought he made his thumb too heavy when he took toll, but he knows the business from *a* to *z*. That's a prime mill site and — well, it will ruin me."

Mr. Osborne whistled thoughtfully. "And Rodney Osborne," he said, "is a Village man born and bred, your cousin and mine."

"Of course, I'll get on somehow," said Mr. Spotswood. "It's for David that I mind. I — it had to be the mill for me, you know, instead of the lawyer's office. And I'd set my heart on David's having his chance. College and all that."

Anne's voice broke the pause that followed. "Is that house down there going to be a mill, Cousin Giles? The mill you said would hurt yours?"

He nodded.

She looked distressed and puzzled. "But I thought — isn't that Cousin Rodney's land? a part of Happy Acres?" she asked.

"It's his all right enough," he said, "and — well *I* might call it unhappy acres."

"Have you told Cousin Rodney about it, — about how this mill will hurt you?" she asked.

He shook his head, with a grim smile.

“Oh, that’s a pity !” she said. “Do hurry and explain to him so he can tell that man he mustn’t have a mill there. He’s so kind, you know — he’ll love to make it all right.”

“Bless your dear trusting heart, kitty-kin !” said Mr. Osborne. “Well, we must pace along home to dinner. — Don’t worry too much, Giles. Something may turn up, as our friend, Mr. Micawber, would say.”

CHAPTER VIII

THAT afternoon, Van hauled posts and boards to Happy Acres and Mr. Osborne carried tools to build the promised arbor. Anne took some wire and a ball of twine to fasten up the rose-bushes.

“We’ll just cut out the dead wood and help the living part to grow the right way,” she said. “Cousin Miranda prunes her roses and she thinks they look better and bloom better. But David says these bushes are just covered with roses, anyway — bushels of them, he says. And I think they are more comfortable to grow as they are used to doing and not be trim and pruned. This isn’t like a tame garden where —”

She stopped, staring in dismay. The jonquil bed, two hours before a mass of golden blossoms, was bare. There was not

a flower left. Not one except some withered ones that Anne had bent till they were hidden in the green leaves, because she thought they must feel so sorry for themselves among their gay, fresh companions.

“What the —” Mr. Osborne coughed and strangled. “What the mischief! Van! you Van! you trifling scoundrel!” He turned fiercely to the negro fastening the plough traces. “Why did you pull Miss Anne’s jonquils?”

“Miss Anne’s jonkils?” repeated Van, stupidly.

“I’ve a mind to wear that whip out on your back.”

“Boss, boss! please, boss! I aint done nothin’. I aint pulled no flowers. What I want wid flowers? What flowers?”

“You know the flowers that were here. You —”

“Uh! dem yaller flowers! Umph! Dey is gone. I aint took notice dey was gone.

Dey sho was there at twe've o'clock. Boss, I aint teched one on 'em."

Anne came to his rescue. "Don't scold Van, please, Cousin Mayo. He didn't take the flowers. He says he didn't. I know he wouldn't. I shouldn't think anybody would, but" — her voice quivered.

Stephen and David, who had promised to help build the arbor, now came up and they, too, were amazed to find the jonquils gone.

"It was mean to take them, downright mean," said David. "Who would do it? Why would anybody do it?"

"Why on earth —" Steve began with a puzzled air, then a sudden wonder dawned on his face and grew to certainty. "I know. I believe I do. I don't like to say. We'll see. Come, David, you come with me. Quick," he said, as they hurried down the path, "before Dick gets back. Don't you know he was just going home to dinner when we came away?"

“Well, what of that ?” asked David.

“Didn’t you hear what he said to Anne about Spanish gold ? It’s all that foolish play of his. Bah ! We’ll raid his pirate den.”

Steve leading, the two boys hurried down the hill, overgrown with rhododendrons, that the children called ‘Ivy Bluff.’ At the foot of the hill, they turned and followed Tinkling Water till they came to a rocky cliff. Here Steve stopped and pulled aside an overhanging bush.

So well was the cave concealed that even then there was no sign of its whereabouts. Two large rocks seemed to rest against one behind — seemed, but did not, for one tilted, leaving an opening through which crawled Steve and David. They found themselves in a small cave hollowed out by Dick’s days and weeks of labor. They examined the place as well as they could in the gloom. There were no jonquils in sight.

“Stung !” exclaimed Steve. “Let’s go before he comes.”

But slow David, once on a trail, followed it hard.

"I'm going to look," he said. "If he was playing it was gold, he wouldn't leave it lying around."

"I'm a chuckle-head," said Steve.

Growing accustomed to the darkness, they groped about and finally, under an overhanging ledge of rock, David discovered a heap of dead leaves.

"Queer place for leaves," he said, and pulled them aside. Jonquils and jonquils and jonquils ! There they were, stored as carefully as if they were gold indeed. The boys gathered up big armfuls of them. Outside, Steve put down his flowery burden and carried into the den an armful of twigs. A moment later, he reappeared.

"I put them under the leaves, in place of the flowers," he said. "The pirate can't tell at a glance that his hoard has been disturbed. And we'll not give him time for more than a glance. Oh, David, David,

hurry ! We've got to get back here before Dick comes. Oh ! I wouldn't take anything for this."

"I'm sorry for Anne," said David, soberly.

"So am I. — Dave, on your life, don't drop a blossom. We'll fix him, David. I'll get fishing rods from Mr. Spotswood. You run home and get some matches and red pepper. Hurry up, and don't you fail to bring the pepper."

"You always give some one else the errands," grumbled David. "What on earth do you want with pepper?"

"You'll see. Use your feet, son. I'm doing the brain work. Stop grumbling, Dave, and hurry. Now the suckers are going to do the catching."

Anne looked very solemn when her plucked jonquils were laid before her, but Mr. Osborne was so indignant that she put aside her distress and tried to appease him.

"Dick was just playing," she said, bravely

forcing a smile. "He'd never have done it, if he'd thought I'd really care." Her voice faltered on the last word.

"It was his business to think," said Mr. Osborne.

"They are lovely and they'll keep fresh a long time, if we put them in water," said Anne.

"Ah, no! I have it!" exclaimed Mr. Osborne. "We'll send them a-missionary-ing. To the Callahans you told me about — especially to the one that got roses out of an ash barrel for your Honey-Sweet's funeral. I warrant they aren't getting jonquils like these out of Washington ash barrels. Don't you want to send a boxful to those children?"

Anne clapped her hands. "I shall love it," she declared. "I am so glad you thought of it and so glad the jonquils are all pulled. I wouldn't have had the heart to pull them myself. And I'll love to send them. The first thing to do, though, is to

fix a nice little box for Cousin Rodney. He says he doesn't wear buttonhole flowers, but he will like to have these in his room where he can see how sunshiny they are."

There was such a big boxful of jonquils that Anne was perplexed. "The Callahans haven't anywhere to put all those," she said. "The only vases that they have are an old blue pitcher and a cracked fruit jar. I wonder—" Her face lighted. "Oh, let's send them to Miss Margery, dear Miss Margery Hartman. Do! We'll ask her to give the Callahans some, and she'll have a lot left over for the other 'poor things.' You see, Miss Margery is the Charities lady in Georgetown," Anne explained, "and she always knows such beautiful things to do. She will like to give the flowers, and she'll know the right people, too. She says everybody needs bread and roses; but she hasn't enough money to buy both, and so she has to buy the things poor people can't do without — groceries and shoes, you know."

None the worse for their journey to the pirate cave, the jonquils were packed ; then Cousin Mayo put Rosinante to the buggy and carried the boxes to the station.

Anne decided not to go to Happy Acres that afternoon, nor, indeed, for several afternoons to come. It would look too lonesome without jonquils. Cousin Mayo said there would be more blossoms in a few days, and then the arbor would be finished, ready for rose vines to be trained on its lattice. So Anne sat down to write a loving, grateful note to Cousin Rodney and a letter to Miss Margery.

“And please,” the letter to the Charity lady ended, “put a bunch of jonquils on Cousin Dorcas’s table, — a bunch big enough to cover her old black account-book, and be sure to keep a nice big bunch for yourself.”

Meanwhile, Stephen and David were carrying out their plan to ‘get even’ with Dick. They crouched under the rhododen-

dron bushes on the bluff, near the pirate den. Knowing how watchful Dick was, they dared not talk except in undertones, and they feared to move their cramped limbs lest an unwary movement or the rustling of dry leaves should betray their whereabouts.

“Suppose he doesn’t come back to-day?” questioned David, rubbing his neck that ached from peering sideways down the bluff. “Suppose we just waste all this Saturday, too, hunting him? We’ll be suckers again.”

“One comfort is he’ll not know it,” said Stephen. “Oh, he’ll come. He’ll want to carry on his fool play, before the jonquils wither.”

There was another weary wait that seemed very long. David wriggled and groaned. “Every which way I turn, a sharper rock gouges my side,” he complained.

Steve clutched his arm. “Sh! There he comes.”

Lying flat on the ground, they raised their heads cautiously and watched Dick's approach. He sauntered as if aimlessly, circled, turned, crossed, and recrossed the stream, pausing now and then for a keen lookout. Thus he drew near the entrance to his den.

As soon as his head disappeared under the overhanging bush, Steve whispered : "Now, now, Dave ! You go up stream to Coon Hollow. Answer my 'coo-ees.' And work your way down stream. Take plenty of time."

Steve scrambled to his feet and, trampling the leaves noisily, went whistling along the bluff. A little above the pirate den, he descended to the stream and loitered along, throwing stones in the water.

"Coo-ee !" he called, and again "Coo-ee !"

"Coo-ee !" came David's answer.

"Uh Dave, you Dave ! Come down here," Steve shouted. "Let's fish Deep

Glen Pool. — Oh, suckers, suckers, I say !” he exclaimed under his breath.

He and David made their way toward each other till they met at Deep Glen Pool. They crossed the stream and sat down to fish opposite the den, where Dick could not make a movement unseen by them. Once he peeped out, his head cautiously covered with his old felt hat. But Stephen was on the lookout.

“Hi !” he said, shying a stone at the bluff. “Dave, didn’t you see something move by that rock over there ? Reckon it’s a rabbit ? — He feels good now,” he went on in an undertone. “He’s beginning to get cramped and tired, but he’s chuckling to himself, thinking how he has us fooled. We’ll make him laugh on the other side of his mouth, before we get through. Suckers, oh, I say !”

The boys fished nearly two hours. Then they made ready for the final scene of their farce.

“Oh, Dave ! we don’t want to take these

home, these three little small fish," Steve said, assuming a tone of deep disgust. "Tell you what! Let's cook them. I'm hungry, anyway. Aren't you?"

David agreed, of course. He had a sandwich in his pocket, and Steve pleaded guilty to a piece of bread and some ginger-cakes. They crossed Tinkling Water and paused on a broad, flat stone just in front of Dick's den.

"Since last Saturday, I make it a point to carry food with me," said Steve, solemnly. "Hungry! I was empty to my toes. — What was that?" he glanced around, at the sound of a faint chuckle. It was not repeated, and Steve went on. "Yes, Dick got the best of us last Saturday. Suckers! that we were."

"But we'll get even with him yet," said David.

"Oh, sure! Here, you get to work," urged Steve, piling up dry leaves and twigs and protecting them with his hat while

he lighted a match. "Bring an armful of dry stuff; then get boards and driftwood from that bend of Tinkling."

Steve built a fire and then smothered the blaze with dry leaves, so as to make a prodigious smoke. A stifled cough came from the pirate den.

Steve grinned. "What was that?" he asked.

"It sounded like some one coughing," answered David.

"Hm! I didn't cough. Did you?" asked Steve.

"No. But it sounded like a cough, sorter far off and hollow," said David.

Stephen let the fire burn brightly for a while. But it was growing late. "We can't make this afternoon long as all day last Saturday," he said in an undertone to David, as they stood watching their fire. "That was the longest day I ever knew. But we've done our best. And I reckon this afternoon seems long enough to Dick."

The fish broiled on the coals and some potatoes half-baked in the ashes were eaten with zest. Then Stephen pulled the fire apart and scattered something on the coals. There arose the pungent fumes of burning red pepper. Stephen and David, standing at a discreet distance from the fire, grinned as there came from the den sounds that could not be repressed.

“Gee whiz !” exclaimed Steve. “I hear the cough you thought you heard an hour ago.”

“And I hear a sneeze,” said David.

“Oh, cougher in the pirate den !” chanted Steve.

“Oh, sneezer in the pirate den !” chimed in David, and then their voices were raised in a shout as of one voice, “Come out, come out, come out !”

A small boy with red face and watery eyes crept between the rocks and under the overhanging rhododendron bushes, then tried to dodge and rush past his besiegers.

But Stephen and David were on the alert. They caught Dick and danced around and around him, shrieking : "Sucker, sucker ! Caught, caught, caught !" Then they whirled him about, singing till they were out of breath :

" My name is Captain Kidd,
And most wickedly I did
As I sailed, as I sailed ! "

CHAPTER IX

THE Village school was unlike any other Anne had ever seen. To begin with, the schoolhouse was a brick cottage festooned with ivy. It was the old 'office' of Broad Acres House, a stately red-brick mansion almost as old as Larkland and far more imposing.

The schoolroom was a large room with a quaint old landscape paper on the walls. It had no desks, no teacher's platform, no maps, no blackboard except a small one on a frame. There were two long, narrow tables with chairs ranged beside them. At one end of the room, there was a bench, and facing this was a big wooden chair, one arm of which extended so as to form a little table. When Anne and Patsy entered the room, this arm-chair was occupied by a little lady, busy correcting test papers.

“That’s Cousin Agnes Wilson,” whispered Patsy.

Anne thought their quiet entrance was unnoticed, but she was soon ready to agree with Patsy that ‘Cousin Agnes sees everything and knows everything.’ Mrs. Wilson looked up and smiled. Anne had not known that eyes could be so clear and deep and beautiful. The firm, sweet face was a worthy setting — one always thought of it merely as a setting — for the eyes.

“So this is my little cousin, Anne Lewis, Anne Mayo Lewis,” Mrs. Wilson said in her soft, unhurried voice, “Anne Mayo’s little daughter.” She put her arm around Anne, pushed aside the fair hair, and explored the small oval face with its clear, almond-shaped eyes, tip-tilted nose, up-curved lips, and delicate, pointed chin. “You have your mother’s nose and the expression but not the color of her eyes,” she said gently.

“Oh ! you knew my mother ?” Anne pressed closer.

“She and I were dear friends when we were children. We were together often at her home and here. This room was our favorite play-place.”

Anne looked around. “I had forgotten. Oh, I remember,” she said with a thrill. “Why, this — this is the picture room. There are the huntsmen, there are the dogs and the deer, just as she said. Were you Agnes? O-oh! Your doll was Mopsy, and mother’s doll was Topsy. I always loved to hear about them and the picture room. Mother used to tell me over and over. After I was big, it was like the other stories — Cinderella and Goody Two-Shoes and the rest. I never thought about its being real. Seeing you and this room is like—why, it’s like seeing Undine and Aladdin’s palace.”

Mrs. Wilson smiled — a slow smile that began at her mouth and turned its corners upward, then narrowed and brightened her eyes. Mr. Osborne said a smile in her eyes was like sunlight on a clear, shaded lake.

She put her hand under Anne's chin and turned the little face upward for a kiss. "We'll go up to the attic some day and you shall see Mopsy," she said. "Now, you may sit here," pointing to a footstool, "until I mark these papers; then I'll give you a place by Patsy."

Anne sat still as a mouse. Presently, her two hands clasped the hand that was stroking her hair, drew it against her cheek, and pressed it to her lips. Cousin Agnes looked down, grave, gentle, pitying the little orphan; and up beamed Anne, sunny-eyed and happy-voiced.

"Just think! Mother's dear friend is my teacher. And think of it! I'm going to school in the picture room. I can hardly wait to tell Cousin Mayo and Cousin Polly. And Aunt Sarah. I wrote to her again yesterday to tell about the rose arbor at Happy Acres, and now here's another letter about the picture room and you."



"JUST THINK! I'M GOING
TO SCHOOL IN THE
PICTURE ROOM!"

Mrs. Wilson kissed her small cousin and smiled as she quoted:—

“‘The world is so full of a number of things
I’m sure we should all be as happy as kings.’”

The room was filling now with pupils. Mrs. Wilson accepted a bunch of violets from a dingy fist, helped one child with a primer lesson, aided another in a struggle with fractions, corrected a problem in geometry, explained a difficult Latin passage, and called the school to order.

At first some eyes were fixed upon Anne, the new pupil, sitting quietly in her corner beside Patsy, but soon all were interested in a visitor that came in. This visitor was a gentleman who came to tell the children about the Boys’ Corn Club, with its thousands of members in all parts of the country.

“Now, boys,” he said, “I want you to join this Corn Club. I want you to get on an acre of land the most good stalks that you can, with the most good ears on each

stalk, and the most good grains on each ear. — How many of you boys live on farms or have good-sized lots about your homes ?”

Most of the boys raised their hands.

“Good. That’s good. Glad to see so many hands up. Now, I tell you what to do, boys. You go straight home and each of you ask your father to give you one acre of land. Tell him that’s to be your farm this year. You want good land. You want him to plough it well. That’s all he is to do. You’ll do the rest. You’ll fertilize and harrow it. You’ll plant your corn and work it as we tell you ; we’ll give you the rules other boys have followed and made big crops. In the fall, you’ll gather that corn and measure it.

“There are prizes for the best crops. Fine prizes. Trips to Washington. Money prizes. Blue ribbons. Some boys are going to win them. Why not you ? And there’s one sure prize that every boy will

get who works his acre according to Corn Club rules. He'll make a good crop, and in making it he'll learn a lot about good farming.

"Now, if you boys want to ask any questions, I'll be glad to answer them."

"Isn't it time that acre was ploughed?"

"What kind of corn must I plant?"

Question after question was asked and answered. Some of the boys, sure of their fathers' consent, joined the Corn Club, and others said they would see about it.

After school, the children lingered to talk over what Mr. Alexander had said, what they thought, and what they thought their fathers would think and say.

"If just I had an acre of land, I'd be in it," declared David. "Don't I wish I had!"

Patsy went off in a peal of laughter. "Oh, you David, David Spotswood!" she said. "You talk about working an acre — an acre — an acre of corn all by yourself.

You, that grumble all afternoon about working a row in the garden !”

“Of course. That’s different,” responded David, gruffly. “Do hush and let me alone.”

It was tantalizing enough to listen to Stephen Tavis, without being teased by Patsy.

“Yes, I joined,” Steve was saying. “I don’t have to ask if I may. All I got to do is to go home and say, ‘Granddad, I joined the Boys’ Corn Club and I want the best acre of land you got and I want it ploughed good and deep.’ Granddad’ll say : ‘All right, sonny. Take your pick and call for any hand and team you want.’”

“If just I had an acre, too,” said David, longingly.

“I wish you did,” said Anne. “To hear Mr. Alexander talk, it seems every boy ought to, doesn’t it ? Wasn’t it fine about the boy that couldn’t get a horse and worked his crop with a goat ?”

"Tell you, Anne," said Dick; "you might give David your jonquil field. That's prime good land."

"Be so wicked as to dig up those jonquils?" exclaimed Anne.

"Why, they aren't any good," said Dick.

"They are," said Anne, earnestly. "They're good to look at. And they go missionarying. I'm going to send Miss Margery a box of late-blooming ones. She says the Callahans were so glad to get those you — those I sent. And they made Thistle Alley like sunshine. And Cousin Dorcas actually cried over hers."

"David could plough the land after the jonquils stop blooming, you know," said Dick.

"He couldn't; he shouldn't." Anne was almost tearful. "There's a lilac — and roses."

"Oh, Anne, Anne!" laughed Patsy. "Why do you mind Dick? He's just teasing."

“Ker-chew ! ker-chew !” Steve pretended to sneeze. “Did you say jonquils, Dick, — or pepper ?”

On her way home, Anne’s thoughts roamed from Cousin Agnes, picture room, and lessons to Corn Club and David, and then from David to his father and the mill. She hoped Cousin Giles had explained matters to Cousin Rodney. She meant to ask Mr. Spotswood, but he was not at the mill. So she went to Mr. Osborne, who was at the new building, overseeing carpenters and tinnerns and masons.

“Why, no. What about the mill ?” he asked, smiling down at her earnest face.

“A mill here would hurt his. It would take away his trade, he says. So often he can’t grind — not in dry weather, you know, for there isn’t enough water. I’m so glad this land is yours, so you can say there sha’n’t be a mill.”

“Hm ! So Giles set you to beg me not to have a mill, did he ?” sneered Mr. Osborne.

Anne flushed at his tone. "Why, no," she answered. "I reminded him of it. It's strange he didn't think of it himself, isn't it?"

"Oh!"

"I knew you would want to know," Anne went on. "Of course, you wouldn't want anybody on your place to do anything to hurt Cousin Giles."

"Oh!" There was more surprise than dissent in his tone.

Anne was puzzled. She did not doubt her Cousin Rodney's kindness, — there was Happy Acres to prove that, — but she was troubled. "Would — would you let that man have a mill here?" she faltered.

Mr. Osborne patted her on the shoulder and she nestled her cheek against his hand. He surprised himself by stooping to kiss her.

"Why not have a new mill?" he suggested; "a mill where people can bring their corn and wheat, and get them ground whether

the water is high or low. Wouldn't that be good?"

"Not if it was bad for Cousin Giles."

"But there are other people besides Cousin Giles. There are weeks and weeks when that mill can't grind and they don't like to wait for their grist."

"Yes — but they can wait. And — why, Cousin Giles says it would ruin him. You see," she went on, "you want to help a lot of people with the new mill, and that's why you didn't think to remember about Cousin Giles. People can get on very well with the old mill, and it's all Cousin Giles has."

She looked up at him, lovingly, admiringly. If he could keep that look on her face — if only he deserved —

Suddenly, he stooped and kissed her again. "I'm sorry," he said, "but — why, child, it's impossible. You see, here is the building nearly finished. I've leased it — made a bargain for five years, with a man

who is to run the mill. He wouldn't be willing to give it up. The bargain is made."

Her face clouded. "Cousin Giles doesn't mind so much for himself. But David ought to go to college. Poor David! He can't have anything — not even a Corn Club acre."

"A what?" Mr. Osborne inquired.

Anne explained about the Corn Club. "And David would like — he'd love — to be in it, and he hasn't any place for his crop. Unless —" she paused — "I might let him have my Happy Acres. It's so dear and beautiful. But David hasn't anything and so —"

"Oh," said Mr. Osborne, hastily, "if that's what he wants — if that will comfort you — I'll give him an acre in that field beside you."

Anne's face brightened. "Thank you, thank you!" she said. "How good you are!"

“And you’ll not worry about the mill?” said her cousin. “You see, I’ve made the bargain. And it really is a good thing for The Village.”

“Of course, you have to keep your word,” she said. “Poor Cousin Giles!”

CHAPTER X

WHEN Anne told David that he was to have a corn crop at Happy Acres, how delighted he was ! how surprised ! And the older people seemed even more amazed than David. Rodney, Rodney Osborne, had given his best tobacco land for a schoolboy's crop ! How on earth did that happen ? Anne was asked over and over again.

"Why, I said David wanted a corn acre. And he gave it. He offered it himself," was all she had to say. She could not bear to mar the happy tale by telling any one, least of all Cousin Giles, what had been said about the mill.

Mr. Spotswood tried to say that he did not wish David to accept this favor from their Cousin Rodney, but Anne looked so

hurt and David so disappointed that he dropped the subject.

Red Mayo Osborne regarded the whole affair as a joke. "And so, David, you're going to farm?" he said. "Well, well, well! That field, that identical field, was a moiety of the grant to your grandfather five times removed. That grant — here is the parchment with the royal seal attached thereto — covered and included four thousand and thirty acres, extending from Tinkling Water to Roanoke River."

"And that very-far-off granddad wasn't a bit prouder of his four thousand and thirty acres than David is of his one," laughed Patsy.

"I'm sure he wasn't." David agreed heartily, going on to give reasons. "He just had to thank the king and set his servants to work. I have to make good, all my own self."

He promptly set to work, — picking up stones, uprooting shrubs, and hauling to

his field, weary wheelbarrow load after load, the manure from the mill stable.

Then came a rainy week that stopped his work and kept Anne from her beloved flowers. Cousin Polly, indeed, thought Anne ought not to venture outdoors at all. Every morning, she said Anne could not possibly go to school that day, for fear of making her cough worse. Every morning, Cousin Mayo, laughing at her sober 'breakfast face' as he called it, brought Meg or Rosinante to the door and rode off to The Village, with his small cousin behind him, bundled in a rubber coat. In the afternoon, they splashed back through the mud. And the cough, instead of being daily worse as Cousin Polly predicted, grew daily better.

"Oh, I wonder if it would be too much to choose for a birthday present? I do want a pony," said Anne, one afternoon, as they returned from a roundabout ride.

"How wishes grow!" commented Cousin

Mayo. "Next thing, it will be a horse and then an elephant; at first, it was only a kitten, you know." He steadied Anne's flying leap to the porch step and paused to take a good look at her. "Rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes!" he observed. "You don't look like even a cousin of the white-faced, skinny youngster that I brought home from Redville. Positively, you are growing fat." He leaned down to pinch her arm and then rode off in the drizzling rain.

Except on the school rides, Anne saw little of her Cousin Mayo those days. In restless humor, he splashed, on foot or horseback, along the country roads, came in late, and spent the evening poring over atlases and books of travel.

One evening, he picked up a tattered volume and read a part of *Marmion* aloud to Anne. The next evening, Mrs. Osborne put a lamp and the book at his elbow.

"Anne and I like to hear you so much," she said. "We thought you might read

to us this evening—every evening. I'd love to hear all of Scott's poems."

"All? The reading would take a long time." He laughed and sighed. "Ah, Delilah!" he said, "I fear, I fear you cannot keep me bound, even with this new rope."

Anne did not understand these words. Cousin Mayo said a great deal that she did not understand. But even a child could see that his wife was trying to keep him interested in first one thing and then another; and it was just as evident that he was growing more and more restless.

So it went on till one afternoon when Anne was sitting in her accustomed corner, struggling over an arithmetic lesson. She consulted the answers in the book and put down figures, then rubbed them out and put them down once more; then she rubbed them out, put them down again, and again consulted the answers in the book; at last, she dropped her work and sat dejectedly staring at the fire.

Cousin Mayo, who had been making calculations in a note-book, sprang up and walked about the room; now stopping to drum on the window, now filling his pipe and letting it go out after an absent-minded whiff. He whirled on his heel when his wife opened the door.

“What’s the use, Poll?” he exclaimed. “Tell me, Poll Parrot, what’s the use? What’s the use of struggling and striving against it? Why not let it end now, as we know it will end—if not to-day, to-morrow or to-morrow’s morrow?”

Looking as if she was afraid of something, she clasped both hands around his arm. “Oh, Mayo, Mayo!” was all she said.

He put his arm around her and kissed her pale, prim little face. “My dear, my dear!” he said. “Oh, Polly, my Poll Parrot! If only I loved a cage!” He laughed, but not mirthfully. “Poll Parrot, don’t you ever tire of things? Don’t you remember and long for the deep, dark,

moonless nights, the blaze of sunshine, the hot fragrances of the tropics, the salt, foaming waves on the coral reefs?" He looked down and met Anne's wondering eyes. "Anne, don't you get tired of the same old things?" he asked in his usual whimsical way. "That elm bough across the window pane there. Don't you wish you could shut your eyes and open them to see it grow up or down or across, instead of slantwise that same old way?"

Anne followed his glance out of the window. "Why, it's never the same two times," she said, puzzled. "See! the wind has it dancing now. And the sky behind it has changed since we began to look. That fleecy cloud running across the blue was never there before. The buds get bigger every day. I'll be so glad when the tiny leaves come out and grow. Elm leaves are so — so ladylike."

Cousin Mayo laughed. "That's something to look forward to, is it? — the

coming of those ladylike elm leaves. But don't you fancy they sometimes envy the little clouds that come and go and are never the same?"

Mrs. Osborne spoke before the question could be answered. "Anne," she said, "I made some tea-cakes this afternoon. They are in the sideboard. Perhaps your Cousin Mayo will like them."

As Anne sat munching a crisp, spicy cake, Mrs. Osborne looked at her thoughtfully. "Ah, child, child!" she said. "These are your happiest days. Make the most of them. You don't know now what trouble is."

Anne looked up. "Cousin Polly," she said seriously, "after a girl goes to school and is expected to know the multiplication table right off"—she sighed—"I think she knows very much what trouble is."

Cousin Mayo chuckled. "Oh, you jewel of an Anne!" he exclaimed. Suddenly he jerked himself down to her level. "How

much is seven times eight? Tell me. Quick."

"Sixty-four. I mean fifty-eight. No, no, no! Fifty-six."

"Why, Anne! I'm surprised to hear a great girl like you hesitate over the multiplication table," Cousin Polly reproached her.

"He — he took me so by surprise. I know it straight, when I have time to think," Anne defended herself.

Cousin Mayo, still chuckling, sat down and helped her with her lesson.

"I suppose you do not want an arithmetic for your birthday present?" he said quizzically.

"Not unless it can be put in my head," Anne replied. She found it even harder than usual to fix her mind on her arithmetic lesson. What was going to happen? she wondered. Something, she felt sure, — but what?

CHAPTER XI

FOR a few days, things went on as usual. Sunshine followed those rainy, gusty days, and March went out like a lamb. Its last afternoon was so mild and fair that Patsy Osborne, going home from school, settled herself in the swing in the corner of the yard. There Anne and Alice and Ruth found her a half-hour later, swaying thoughtfully to and fro.

“There’s Patsy!” they cried in one breath. “Patsy! You Patsy Osborne!” sang out Ruth, scrambling upon the rickety fence. “Wake up and come with us. We’re going to walk with Anne and look for violets in Millbrook Woods.”

Patsy shook her head. “Can’t. Haven’t time. Busy.”

“Busy!” laughed Ruth. “Oh, now! You look busy!”

"Patsy dear, can't you come?" coaxed Anne.

Patsy shook her head so vigorously that her hair ribbon dropped off and her short auburn curls tumbled about her face. "N-O spells 'no' and means 'I won't,'" she declared. "Yes, I'm busy. I'm thinking. Have you all forgotten to remember what day this is?"

"Wh-what day?" The question surprised Ruth. "Why, T-Tuesday."

"T-Tuesday, of course," mimicked Patsy, "and to-morrow'll be Wednesday; yes, and this is the thirty-first of March and to-morrow —"

"F-first of April! first of April! oh, Patsy, what are you going to do?" Ruth jumped on a loose board which came off and sent her sprawling on the ground. Laughing with the others, she picked herself up. "Patsy! What will your pranks do, if the thought of them is so upsetting?" she asked. "Now, tell us what you are going to do."

Patsy pursed her lips and shook her head. "Whatever it is, it's going to be a secret," she declared.

"Well, you are not going to fool me," Ruth announced. "I'm going to watch you all day long."

"Me, too," chimed in Alice. "No more pepper pies like those last year, thank you."

"Of course not," Patsy agreed readily. "It's going to be something else, something much better than that. Oh, but you did look comical when you bit that red-hot pie! You wait, my lady. Just see what you'll get this time."

As the other girls strolled away, Patsy called: "Oh, Anne, beg Cousin Polly to let you come back and spend the night with me. Beg hard. I hope I'll have something to tell you about — you know what."

She did not look very hopeful as she sat there, with a thoughtful frown that made two little wrinkles crisscross her short, freckled nose.

“Oh, why can’t I think of something new?” she sighed at last. “Tarts with cotton in them; April fool placards; nickels with holes to tie strings to them; — they’re the same old things but they’re all I can think of, so, I reckon, they’ll have to do. I want something new, something different. Well, I’d better go in and fix these things. First thing I know, it’ll be lesson time.”

She carried a roll of cotton batting into the kitchen where her mother was preparing supper while old black Emma, droning a hymn and grunting with rheumatism, was busy ironing.

“I promised Anne I’d do the thinking and get things started,” she said. “She’s coming back to spend the night. I may make some cotton pies, mayn’t I, mother?”

Mrs. Osborne nodded. “I’ll mix your pastry,” she said. “I was going to make some lemon wafers for school lunches, but I’ll bake tarts instead and mix the pastry now. How this takes me back to my own

childhood!" she went on, as she sifted flour. "Emma, don't you remember the sawdust pies and paper turnovers your sister Mandy used to make for brother Harrison and me? How brown and crisp and luscious-looking they were! You remember, Emma?"

"Cou'se I ricermembers, Miss M'randa," responded Emma. "An' I hearn mammy tell she use to make dem same kin' o' pies for yo' ma."

"This joke is pretty old, isn't it, mother?" Patsy looked vexed. "What else did you do?"

"Oh, we pinned 'April fool' placards on people, and dropped old purses filled with paper where people would find them."

"Just the things we do," grumbled Patsy. "I wish I could think of something new — bran-span new. — Oh, oh!" Her dismal face beamed and she dropped the cotton with a squeal of delight. "I know what I'll do. Listen, mother," she whis-

pered excitedly in her mother's ear, and Mrs. Osborne smiled and nodded. "Anne will like that. She loves to give people good times. I'll get my own jar of strawberry jam," concluded Patsy, "and you'll make lu-licious tarts, won't you, mother?"

"That I will," agreed Mrs. Osborne. "Your friends will be on the lookout for cotton and sawdust and pepper, the old 'April fool' stand-bys, and when they taste these tarts — well, to my thinking, nothing better ever comes out of a cook stove than great-grandmother Turner's preserve pies."

It was after sunset when Anne came, Alice and Ruth walking with her and lingering at the gate for the prolonged farewell so necessary to the happiness of school-girls who are to be separated for the night. Patsy and Anne had a great deal of whispering and giggling over their plans. After supper, they hurried over their lessons so as to have time for more whispering and giggling.

David was poring over a farm paper and said that he 'had no time for April foolishness,' but Dick, like his sister, was busy with plans for the next day. He poked pen and ink and squares of pasteboard at his father, saying : "Please, father, print these cards. Folks can't read my writings."

Mr. Osborne glanced up from the *Congressional Record*. He was a middle-aged man, — oldish-looking for his age, whatever that might be, — with drooping, stooped shoulders, a red flabby face, pale blue eyes, and reddish hair and mustache beginning to be grizzled. "Hey, son; what is it?" he said, looking over his glasses.

"They're 'April fool' placards, sir," explained Dick.

"Presently, son, presently. Let me finish these proceedings. It is the bounden duty of the sovereign people of these United States to keep themselves informed concerning the course of their servants in the legislative halls at Washington."

Dick peeped over his father's shoulder and before a new page could be commenced, he thrust forward his pen. "Please, father," he coaxed. "It won't take any time. Just 'April fool' on these little few cards."

"How will you get on in the legal profession, son, if you don't learn to write?" demanded Mr. Osborne, holding a placard at arm's length to admire his own lettering.

"I'm not going to be a lawyer, sir," answered Dick.

"Not be a lawyer?" Mr. Osborne was amazed.

"No, sir."

"Why, your grandfather was a lawyer."

"Yes, sir; I know he was."

"And his father before him."

"I can't help that, sir. I want to do something else. Something exciting and — well, I wouldn't mind making some money."

"Indeed, indeed! Now — ah, what, for example?"

"I — I don't know, sir," mumbled Dick.

“I know,” piped Sweet William; “he wants to be a pirate.”

Mr. Osborne laughed easily. “Oh, give you time, you’ll come into line.” He printed another card. “‘April fool.’ Same old legend. Well, well, well! It seems only yesterday since I was inscribing this identical witticism on placards for myself. Let me see. Over thirty years ago! It doesn’t seem possible. There was a half-witted old fellow who occupied a dilapidated cabin back of the tavern — Crazy Jack, we called him — actually he cried when he discovered an ‘April fool’ placard attached to his coat tail — said everybody would believe he was a fool. Remarkable how averse every one is to a joke on himself — and every one ready to perpetrate pranks on others. Same old pranks, too.”

Anne looked disturbed. “Pranks that make people feel bad don’t seem funny.”

“Pshaw!” laughed Dick. “You have to give and take April-fool day. That is,

if you're silly enough to let people take you in. I don't mean to —"

"But, Dick," Anne began, looking at the placards, only to be interrupted by Patsy, who whispered something which made Anne laugh and subside. She sat down in a corner of the old red sofa and pulled her 'thought lock.'

"I must think of something," she said to Patsy, who wanted to play dominoes, "some nice April fool, like your tarts."

"Oh, the tarts are ours, yours and mine together."

Anne shook her head. "It's your plan and your jam and your tart-making. I must think up something all my own."

"You won't," said Patsy. "It's awful hard thinking. I meant these tarts to be ours. We're pals, you know. Miss Du Bois says before that was slang it was a good gypsy word that means comrades."

"You're a darling pal. But I must think of something, something of my very own."

But, as Patsy said, thoughts came hard, and Anne dropped off to sleep, puzzling her brain to contrive a surprise that would be new and pleasant. In the middle of the night, Patsy's nose was tickled vigorously with one of her auburn curls.

"I'm bound to wake you," said Anne's eager whisper. "I'm bound to tell you this."

There followed a whispering and tittering which lasted till Mrs. Osborne called sleepily to demand quiet.

"We'll be still. We'll go to sleep right away," promised Patsy. "But, oh, mother, do come here just a minute. I don't believe I can wait till morning to tell you what Anne is going to do."

Part of Anne's plan involved early rising and a before-breakfast trip to The Village shop where Easter candies were displayed. Sweet William was delighted to find a pink candy egg by his breakfast plate.

"Zis is the kind of egg my Miss Flora's

going to lay," he announced happily. "I just love pinky sweet eggs."

"What'll you do for batterbread and tea-cakes?" asked his mother. "You like them, too, and I can't make them with 'pinky sweet eggs,' you know."

Sweet William considered the question gravely. Then he answered it to his own satisfaction: "Miss Flora she'll lay two times a day. She'll lay one pinky sweet egg for me to eat and she'll lay one — one eggshell egg for mudder to make cake."

"Whew! nearly half-past eight!" exclaimed Dick, folding his napkin hastily. "It's me for the schoolhouse. Where's my lunch, Patsy?"

"Oh, Dick! I left them on the kitchen table. Bring mine, too, and Anne's, please," Patsy said, struggling with a twisted book-strap. As soon as Dick's back was turned, she opened his book bag, jerked out the 'April fool' placards and thrust them behind the bookcase.

"They can't hurt people's feelings there," commented Anne.

"Now, Sweet William," cautioned Patsy, "don't you let the cat out of the bag."

"Huh?" Sweet William examined his mother's work-bag. "Kitty-Mew's not in this bag. What bag? Where?"

When Dick came back, Patsy was laughing at Sweet William and tugging at her book-strap.

"Here's your package, Patsy," said her mother. "This side up, with care."

"What's that?" inquired Dick, suspiciously.

Patsy laughed. "It's a secret."

"Well, keep it. I don't care," returned her brother. "But you needn't think you are going to fool me. My eyes will be open, wide open, all this day. Better tell me what's in your box, Patsy. I can help you fool the others — What you grinning about, Anne?"

"Oh, nothing much," answered Anne. "Just a secret."

“Aren’t we going to have a splenificent time to-day?” exclaimed Patsy, dancing down the path.

At recess, Patsy disappeared and a few minutes later she gave the signal call used for important meetings of the secret society of which she was president. The other members — Anne, Alice, Ruth, David, Dick, and Steve — came trooping along the box-wood walk to a summer-house where their meetings were held.

On a box spread with newspapers, a feast was prepared. Around a pyramid of tarts, were neat pieces of pasteboard, ‘plates,’ on each of which Patsy solemnly placed a tart. Then she glanced around at her guests. They, mindful of the day, eyed the food and their hostess suspiciously.

Dick found something peculiarly provoking in his sister’s demure expression. “Who’ve you fooled, now?” he demanded, tossing his tart down the walk where it was snapped up by a hungry-looking yellow dog.

Patsy gave a little startled "Oh!" then laughed with the others. "Camp Follower liked it," she said.

"Th-they look good," said Ruth. No one could deny that they looked good — those little tarts with fluted edges and crisp brown tops flecked with red where the berry juice had bubbled through the pricked pastry.

Patsy said nothing. The corners of her mouth were drawn severely down but her eyes twinkled like stars.

"They smell good," commented Alice. "Why doesn't somebody taste one?"

"That's what I say. Why don't you, Dumpling?" asked Stephen.

There was another ripple of laughter. Patsy gave up trying to control her mouth and let it twitch and curve upward, making mischievous dimples on her freckled pink cheeks.

"What do you think, Anne?" asked Stephen.

“Anne doesn’t have to think. She knows,” David declared. “Everything Patsy knows, Anne knows, too. See how mum she is.”

Anne laughed but refused to speak.

“Well, I may be It,” announced Stephen, after a brief pause, “but this little pie looks too good and smells too good for me not to find out how it tastes.” He nibbled cautiously, then bit a half-moon out of his tart.

“April fool! April fool!” Patsy exclaimed with peals of laughter.

Stephen nodded and munched on. “Best I ever had,” he agreed.

“Tart or April fool?” asked Patsy.

“Both,” answered Stephen.

Following Stephen’s example, the others tasted their tarts.

“Fine and dandy!” came from David.

“*Delicious!*” said Dumpling.

“Good, gooder, goodest!” declared Ruth.

Dick looked at his empty plate.

“Who’ve you fooled now?” Patsy asked mockingly, putting another tart before him

and giving a second one to each of the others. "Who've you fooled now, Mr. Richard Harrison Osborne?" she repeated, offering him half of her second tart.

Dick refused it and grinned. "You — and Camp Follower."

"I'd have liked to make us three apiece. They aren't as big as they are little, you know," Patsy explained, "but this is all the large my jar of strawberry jam was. Seems to me, preserve pies — that's what mother calls these — taste better than anything else I know. Maybe, it's because mother and grandmother used to have play-party tarts just like these, when they were little girls."

"That does make them different," agreed Ruth.

"They taste different because they are different," laughed Stephen. "These would be just as good, if they were the first ever made."

The other boys and girls, all cousins more or less remote, looked uncomfortable. The

Village elders were in the habit of mentioning grandparents and great-grandparents as casually and almost as frequently as they mentioned cousins and neighbors, so that speeches like Patsy's came naturally to the children. But, with instinctive delicacy, they seldom made them before Stephen.

"I'm so horrid!" Patsy thought penitently, remembering his rough grandfather and dowdy mother. "I do hope his grandmother wasn't a washerwoman. — I don't care a bit if she was!"

Stephen, good-humored and undisturbed, started with surprise when the school bell rang. "Why, I had no idea it was so late," he said. "I meant to hide that old bell and get our gang off to play ball in Walnut Meadow. 'Twould have been a good half-hour before Mrs. Wilson got us back."

"Yes, and a bad hour after school before she let you go," said Patsy. "So you just as well march in on time. Have to, anyway. There's Cousin Agnes at the door."

CHAPTER XII

AFTER school, Anne and Patsy hurried off to carry out the prank which Anne had waked Patsy at midnight to describe. They went to Mr. Blair's shop and Anne exchanged a quarter of a dollar for three oranges and three small coins, — "the shiniest nickels you have, please, sir," she requested. They went into Mrs. Blair's sitting-room which opened on a porch alongside the shop, and borrowed a pen-knife, a big needle, and some thread. Anne cut little disks from the end of each orange, put in a nickel, and sewed the peel back over the coin.

Then, Anne and Patsy ran down The Street and along The Back Way to a blind alley beside the blacksmith shop, where old wheels and rusty irons were piled against a board fence. On the other side of this fence was the cabin in which lived

Emma and Emma's daughter Susan and Emma's Susan's shiftless husband, Cross-Eyed Tom, and their three children, Amos, Betty Bessy, and Susan Emma.

Anne and Patsy stopped beside the fence, and Anne crouched down to peep through a knothole which commanded a view of the one small window of the cabin. Only the children were at home, Anne knew. She had seen Tom loafing on The Street, Susan was sweeping the school-room, and Emma was in Mrs. Osborne's kitchen. Amos and Betty Bessy, lying flat on their stomachs, were playing with some walnuts that they pretended were marbles. Little Susan Emma, basking in the sunshine at the open door, was hush-a-bying a corn-cob doll.

"You wait here and don't you let them see you," said Anne to Patsy. Slipping the oranges inside her blouse, she swung herself nimbly upon the fence, — she could climb like a cat, — stepped on the low roof

and crept cautiously along till she reached the stick-and-mud chimney. Then she paused and listened.

“Yock-a-by babe-ee!” crooned Susan Emma.

“Gi’me dat marble; dat roundes’ one’s mine,” declared Amos.

Anne leaned over and dropped an orange down the chimney. It fell with a soft thud in the fireplace, bounced on the hearth, and rolled across the cabin floor, unobserved by Amos and Betty Bessy who were contending for possession of the “roundes’ marble.”

“Purty yaller apple!” gurgled Susan Emma, dropping her doll to clutch the golden fruit. “Purty yaller apple!” And then she gave such a shrill squeal of delight that her brother and sister looked around.

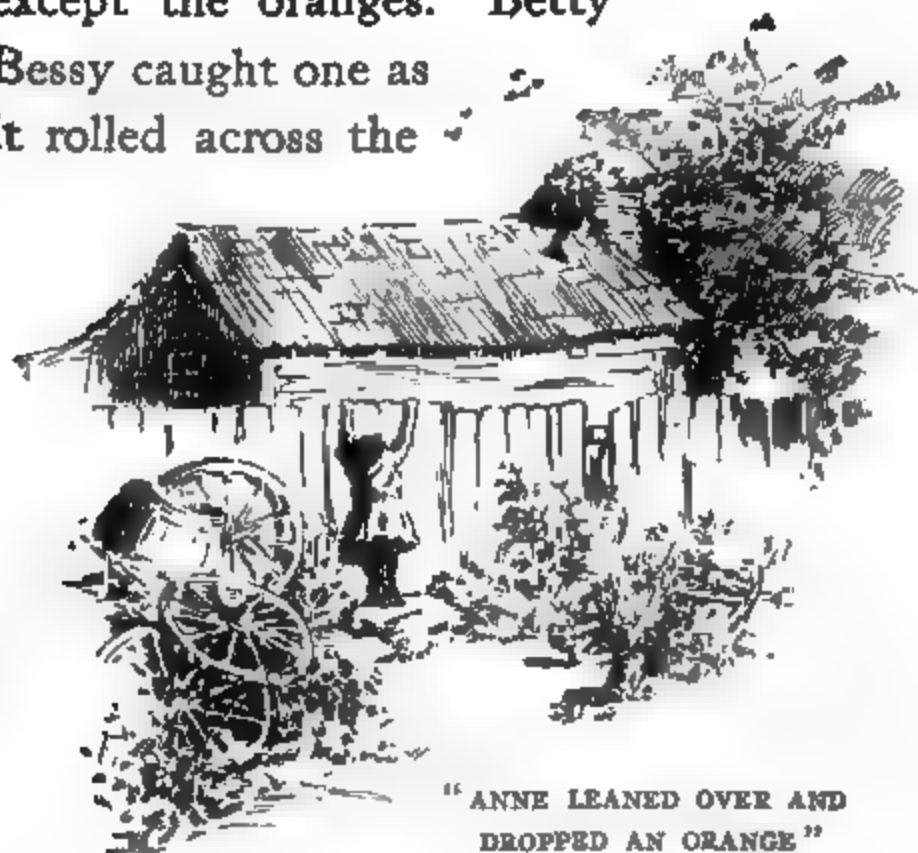
“Name o’ goodness!” exclaimed Betty Bessy. “Whar’d dat come from?”

“Golly!” cried Amos.

Anne threw the other oranges down the chimney, slid along the roof, and dropped

down beside Patsy, — not noiselessly but unheard and unseen by the children in the cabin, who had eyes and ears for nothing except the oranges. Betty

Bessy caught one as it rolled across the



"ANNE LEANED OVER AND
DROPPED AN ORANGE"

floor and Amos swooped under the bed for the other.

"Purty yaller apple!" said Susan Emma for the dozenth time, bobbing her kinky head gleefully.

"Dey aint apples; dey's oranges; I

seen 'em in Mr. Storekeeper Blair's winder," said Betty Bessy.

"I was 'bout to say dey's oranges," Amos said. As eldest, he resented the fact that Betty Bessy, with her quicker wit and readier tongue, was always taking the lead. "Yaller oranges," he announced firmly.

"Purty yaller apple-orнге !" cooed Susan Emma, clutching her new-found treasure with both little black hands, as if fearing it would vanish as suddenly as it had come.

"W'y hi !" exclaimed Betty Bessy. "Dese here oranges is got little pieces sewed on de en'. Somebody must 'a' plugged 'em to see if dey was ripe and den put back de plug. Like we do water-millions."

"Huh !" scoffed Amos. "Oranges don't grow in 'a' patch, like water-millions. Dey come in boxes."

Meanwhile, Susan Emma's fingers were tugging at the loose thread on her orange; a disk of peel came off and something round and hard and shiny fell on the floor.

Betty Bessy picked it up. "Dis here looks like money," she said doubtfully.

"Mine, mine, mine!" screamed Susan Emma.

"Le' me see," said Amos. "W'y, 'tis money. Hit's a nickel."

"Mine, mine! Gi' me, gi' me!" shrieked Susan Emma.

"Here's one in mine," said Betty Bessy, hurriedly examining her orange.

"An' one's in mine," chimed in Amos. "Take it, greedy," he said, restoring her nickel to Susan Emma who at once ceased roaring and began to coo. Amos turned his coin over and over and tried his teeth on it. "Hit's a sho 'nough nickel, Bet Bess, to buy things wid — soap an' lamp ile an' coffee," he said, naming the articles his mother usually sent him to purchase.

Betty Bessy knew something else. "Dem's what mammy's an' granny's nickels is for," she asserted, tossing her head. "Mr. Storekeeper Blair's got candy an'

chawin' gum, too. I done bought some two-three times when I—I done foun' some money. Candy's bes' but gum las's longes'. Tell you what, Amos. You git candy an' gi'me half, an' I'll git gum an' len' you de loan of it when my jaws git tired. What's dat?" A sudden, smothered noise made her look around.

Anne and Patsy held their breath to keep from giggling again and crouched out of sight behind the fence.

"I was 'bout to say we could buy some candy an' gum," agreed Amos. "Whosom-ever sont dem oranges —"

"B'lieve 'twas ol' Santa," interrupted Betty Bess. "Bet you 'twas Santa. 'Twant nobody but ol' Santa Claus come slingin' 'em down dat chimbley. He jes' got mixed up an' thought 'twas Christmas. Time's always a-changin' an' he mought 'a' jes' got mistook 'bout it."

"I was gwine on to tell you," Amos said reproachfully, "Mr. Santa Claus brung

dese here things. Yo' tongue's so peart, I don't git a chance to tell you nothin'. 'Twas Mr. Santa Claus, sho. Betty Bess !" he hurried on to get ahead of his sister. "Whyn't you thank ol' Santa ? Whar's yo' manners ? You, Susan Emma ! You come here. You come on an' thank Mr. Santa Claus."

The three little ragged figures crouched on the hearth, the three little black faces looked gratefully up the chimney, and the three little shrill voices called : "Thankee, thankee, thankee, Mr. Santa Claus !"

Anne made her voice big and gruff. "April fool !" she shouted.

As she and Patsy scampered away, Betty Bessy's voice followed them : "Come ag'in, Mr. April Fooler ! Come ever' day !"

Anne and Patsy gave a merry history of the day as, with Sweet William tagging behind, they followed Mrs. Osborne into the pantry for a 'snack.'

"Isn't it funny ?" Patsy concluded.



" ' THANKEE, THANKEE, THANKEE,
MR. SANTA CLAUS ' "

MARY LANE DUNNILLAD

“People have been more surprised at the nice surprises than they ever were at the other kind. We’ve had the best good time ! and laughed and laughed ! I reckon, Emma would say I’ve laughed on the right side of my mouth.”

“Huh ?” Sweet William looked puzzled.

His mother explained. “Anne and sister have been doing pleasant things when people were expecting disagreeable ones. Dick and David and Stephen and the others were looking for sawdust pies and sister gave them strawberry tarts. And Anne gave Amos and Betty Bessy and Susan Emma a beautiful surprise of oranges and nickels.”

Sweet William ate another tea-cake while he considered the matter. Then he announced : “I’m going to give my Miss Flora MacFlimsey a nice April fool. She thinks I got wheat for her. I going to give her cake.” Off he trotted, calling, “Coo, chicky, chicky, chick ! Coo, Flora !”

Miss Flora was on the porch steps. As the children came out, the fowl flitted its lank wings and hopped on the porch rail. The skinny neck was thrust out and "Cock, cock, cock, coo!" there came forth a feeble crow.

"Why, why," Patsy exclaimed in surprise, "she's a rooster!"

"She isn't not," protested Sweet William. "She's my hen to lay me eggs."

Flora flapped the lank wings and crowed louder than before: "Cock a doodle doo!"

"A rooster!" laughed Anne.

"She shan't be no rooster," cried Sweet William, stamping his foot. "Mudder give her to me to be my hen to lay eggs and she shall be a lady hen." His voice quivered.

"Oh, gentleman hens are so pretty and big!" Anne spoke with merry persuasive-ness. "Listen, Sweet William, you just listen. Flora's saying, 'April fool, little master!'"

Then Sweet William laughed, too, and trotted merrily to the gate with Anne.

CHAPTER XIII

THE surprises of that April day were not yet over. On her way home, Anne saw, near the mill, Mr. Spotswood and Mr. Rodney Osborne. She had not seen Mr. Osborne since he gave David the corn acre and she started toward him, eager to tell what good times she and David were having at Happy Acres. But at sight of her cousins' faces, at sound of their voices, she stopped, puzzled and distressed.

A conversation, started with the best intentions on Mr. Spotswood's part, had drifted into stormy waters.

"I am going to talk over affairs with Rodney, in a frank, friendly way," he had said to himself. "I'll explain my case to him. He must have some feeling for the old mill that's a landmark of our forefathers. Maybe, he's not bound to Chan-

dan and I can make some arrangement to run both mills. Or — or something. Anyhow, it can't do any harm to talk over the matter in a pleasant, friendly way. That's what I am going to do."

So he waited for Rodney Osborne to come back from the new building and met him with, "Hello, Rodney. Pleasant day, isn't it?"

"Not to me. Too damp. Gives me rheumatism," said Mr. Osborne, unsmilingly.

"Ah! I know how bad that is," said Mr. Spotswood; "I have a twinge myself, now and then. Come, have a smoke. Here's some prime tobacco."

"Stopped smoking. Indigestion," was the glum answer.

"Ah! that's bad, too. I hope Larkland work is getting on all right."

"It's not. Van's got the bay mule lame. Mayo's in one of his fly-off humors." Mr. Osborne started to walk on.

In that mood, it would have been wiser to let him go, but Mr. Spotswood, intent on settling matters, stopped him with, "Rodney, I'd like to have a few minutes' talk with you."

"Well?"

"You and I are both Village boys, Rodney, and cousins," Mr. Spotswood began pleasantly; "of course, we feel an interest in the welfare of our home people. And we love the old landmarks. This mill, for instance. Even if we have to sacrifice our own interests a little, we —"

"You mean," interrupted his cousin, "you want me to sacrifice my interests? That's generally the case with you pretty-talking fellows."

Mr. Spotswood's face flushed but he answered good-temperedly: "I am willing to do my part. But, you know, Rodney, a fellow with nothing but a mill where the water fails him every dry spell, is at a disadvantage —"

“Oh !” Mr. Osborne sneered. “You’re whining about my mill down there, are you ? And because Chandan has the lease ?” Even if he had noticed Mr. Spotswood’s start of surprise he would not have understood it, for he thought of course Anne had repeated the conversation about the mill. It vexed him to have the matter brought up again. “Don’t think you can beg off by reminding me that I’m from the kennel you belong to. I’m not going to —”

“Be asked any favor by me,” interrupted Mr. Spotswood. “Most men put their kith and kin before strangers and —”

“I manage my own business so as to make money and don’t have to whine around, asking people to favor me because they are my cousins.”

Anne came up just then, as Mr. Spotswood’s face darkened and his voice rang out harshly: “Manage it as you please. Choose a partner, like that tricky rascal Chandan. Make money. Yes, and make

yourself despised by every man and woman — by even a child like that — as a grasping old skinflint !”

With these words he went back to the mill, with an uncomfortable sense of having said nothing that he had intended to say and a great deal that he had not intended.

Mr. Osborne turned suddenly and, for the first time, saw Anne. For a second, he gazed hard at her, half expecting her eyes to reflect her cousin's anger. But, looking only puzzled and troubled, she put her hand into his as trustingly as ever.

“It — it's been a long time since I saw you,” he said, stooping to kiss her.

“Not since you gave David his corn acre,” she said, forgetting everything else at that pleasant thought. “Oh, Cousin Rodney, he's so happy over it. I'm so glad, so glad you're here to-day. I was afraid you'd stay away till Happy Acres changed. Please let's go there. I want you to see it just as it is. It can never be so lovely

again. And I've so much to tell you. Patsy and I have had the best good time to-day! But the nicest surprise of all is seeing you."

The last words decided Mr. Osborne's doubt about going with her. They went up the path together, she telling about their April pranks and he laughing at the way Miss Flora MacFlimsey April-fooled them all. Anne called his attention to Happy Acres' beauties, one by one. There was the arbor with the latticed sides. She pointed out the budding roses that promised leaves soon and roses before long. She called on him to admire the pink-flowered peach-tree, now in full blossom, and the plum- and cherry-trees, like great white bouquets against the pines. Then she gathered him a nosegay, of little single white violets, pure and wholesome and sweet as life ought to be — and was in The Village.

"If only I'd known you were coming," she said regretfully, "I'd not have gathered

any yesterday. Miss Fanny Morrison had a headache and I took her some to give a comforting smell. I meant to send you the first, because you're so good and generous."

He winced from the look of loving admiration, thinking how grievous it would be to see Anne's eyes unfriendly and reproachful. Of course, they would turn her against him, these soft, shiftless, unbusinesslike cousins, who disliked him, he thought bitterly, just because he understood and looked out for his own interests. Would it be possible — Anne was only a child — but might he not make her understand his position so as to secure her good opinion ?

He hesitated, at a loss how to begin. If only he had been aware of the fact, it was quite unnecessary to begin at all. No one in The Village, not even sharp-tongued Miss Fanny Morrison, would have told innocent, loving, trusting little Anne about the hard bargains and close dealings which made men call Rodney Osborne a skinflint.

As he fingered the little bunch of violets, he said hesitatingly, "You see, Anne, I — I don't want anything except what belongs to me."

"Why, you don't even want that, Cousin Rodney," Anne disagreed admiringly. "Here's Happy Acres where I have my flowers and Dick his corn acre and we all have such good times. It is all yours, and you are so generous you hardly want a flower for yourself. It just seems you want to have things to let other people enjoy them."

"Oh!" He hesitated a minute, then went on, "Now, there's that mill of mine. It's really to the neighborhood advantage to have a good mill, going all the time."

"Of course, you want to help everybody," answered Anne, but her face clouded and she said sadly, "Poor Cousin Giles!"

"What did he say when you told him about — what I said that day?" he put the question awkwardly.

“Why, I didn’t tell him,” said Anne.
“It was — not pleasant.”

“Oh !” Mr. Osborne said blankly. He had taken it for granted that she had told. “Then, he didn’t know of Chandan’s lease till just now. That’s why he talked so rough.”

Anne apologized for him. “Poor Cousin Giles ! He feels so bad. And he has so much time to be worried there all by himself. Cousin Polly says it certainly is a pity David isn’t a girl, to make him some sort of a home.” There was a moment’s pause and then Anne looked around and exclaimed, “Oh, is it just getting so dark because of the pine woods ? Or is it really late ? Cousin Polly told me to be home before sundown. It’s been so pleasant here with you that I forgot. Good-by, good-by.” She threw him a kiss and sped down the path.

That evening she fluttered the dictionary leaves awhile. Then she said, “Cousin

Mayo, — it's so hard to find words, — what does 'skinflint' mean ?”

“What does the word suggest to us ?” he asked. “Skin flint ; — a person who tried to skin a flint would be pretty hard, close and miserly, wouldn't he ?”

“Oh, I thought — but, of course, I was mistaken — no one would say it about a generous somebody like Cousin Rodney, would he ?”

“Oh !” said Mr. Osborne, “people — all except you and I — say strange things sometimes.”

CHAPTER XIV

MR. OSBORNE'S restless moods came and went. All at once, he seemed to settle down. For several days, he was very busy, — getting barns and sheds in order, cleaning and oiling and making a list of farm tools and machinery. Evening after evening was spent in looking over account-books and putting bills and receipts in order.

One evening as he laid aside a package of papers, his wife spoke quietly, without looking up from her knitting: "Mayo, when are you going away?"

He started and dropped the papers. "I haven't told any one I was going," he said.

She counted her stitches; then she spoke again. "I thought we'd better talk it over," she remarked. "You might be

planning for me to go to pa's. And I'm not. I'm going to Mattoax. Cousin Persilla wanted me last year when you went to the Hawaiian Islands. Now, she's so crippled with rheumatism that she needs some one. I'll write to her, as soon as you decide what day you are going."

Mr. Osborne paced up and down the room before he spoke.

"It's such a chance," he said at last, "such a chance. Tom — think of Tom Adams in the United States Senate, Polly!" — she did not echo his nervous laugh — "Tom writes I can have a job on the Canal Zone, a little job that I can chuck in three or four months, to foot it home through Old Mexico. I've always wanted to go there. Fancy sitting under a palm-tree in tropical sunshine and seeing snow-clad peaks jagged against the blue, blue sky. Think of tramping along roads where the Montezuma travelled and Cortez marched." His face glowed.

It may have been that his wife did not care about Mexico. It may have been that she cared too much about his going away to be enthusiastic over the attractions that drew him from her. She spoke rather quickly though her words were gentle and cool as snowflakes. "Yes. Yes. It's all right, Mayo. — You'll want me to pack your summer underwear, I reckon."

There was hardly a pause before he answered. "Yes," he said. Then he went behind her, put his hands on her shoulders, and drew her close to him as he talked. "I'll carry just my old travelling-bag, of course. And, of course, you'll stay wherever suits you best. There'll be nothing here to worry about. Van will keep on with the farm work and Rodney will be back and forth to oversee it."

He stooped and kissed her. "Polly, Polly!" he exclaimed. "I do fight against it. But when the longing comes, I — I have to go. You deserve something better,

— a good, sensible sobersides. But then what would become of me? You're the only woman in the world that could bring me back from the ends of it. When I'm freezing in Greenland or sweating in Brazil, I know that at six o'clock you're going, with your key-basket on your arm, to feed the chickens, and at ten o'clock you're turning down the lamp. And—I — come — back."

She patted his cheek as one would soothe a troubled schoolboy. "There, there!" she said. "It's all right, all right, Mayo. Your love of roving is as much a part of you as your brown eyes. I know that. I can't make them blue. I don't want to. It's all right."

There was a little silence. She knit briskly.

When Mr. Osborne spoke again, it was in his usual whimsical manner. "I don't believe your geraniums would flourish, Polly dear, unless they had change of air once or twice a year. As for your fowls,

whenever they hear a wagon drive into the yard they lie down on their backs and hold up their feet to be tied."

The smile that she forced was very faint. "And about Anne?" she asked.

Anne, forgotten in her corner, had listened to this conversation with breathless interest. Now, hearing herself mentioned, she flew into her Cousin Mayo's arms, saying over and over, "I don't want you to go away. I don't want you to go. Oh! I do want you to stay here."

"Honey, honey!" He stroked her soft hair. "I'm going to bring you back a new story. And here are all the other cousins quarrelling because we've had you and wouldn't divide. Now, you can go to Red Mayo's where Cousin Dorcas meant you to go at first."

Anne stared at him with round eyes. "Why, how did you know?" she stammered. "I never told you."

He laughed. "Call on Van for any

help you want at Happy Acres. He and David will train the roses on your arbor lattice. Dear, how time goes! In next to no time, you'll be sending roses to your city folks."

A few days later, Cousin Mayo went away.

Anne, remembering her sad pleasure at being wept over by the Callahans when she left Washington, had resolved to give him a tearful farewell. But alas! the parting was unlike her plan. After steadfastly refusing to tell when he was going, Cousin Mayo drove by the schoolhouse one day at recess-time, with Van beside him in the old buggy. As he passed, he called, "Hey, children! hey, you all! Good-by. I'm gone."

Anne rushed down the path. "Wait, wait, Cousin Mayo! Oh, Cousin Mayo, aren't you going to kiss me good-by?"

"Here's a dozen kisses, with all my love." Cousin Mayo kissed his hand but did not stop.

Anne ran down the road, calling after him.

He paused at a distance. "Anne," he hallooed, "I've a question I want you to think over and answer when I come back. How much is seven times eight?" He threw her another kiss and laid the whip along Rosinante's back. In spite of herself, Anne joined in her schoolmates' laughter.

"He n-n-never will say good-by," observed Ruth.

"Isn't it strange and interesting how he's always going and coming, coming and going?" said Dumpling, with her slow smile. "Mother says it's his Indian blood. We are all descended from Pocahontas, you know."

"Well," said Dick, "father's the same kin to Pocahontas that Cousin Mayo is. And father hates to move from one room to another. When mother spring-cleaned and put the bed in a different corner, he said he couldn't sleep that night. I don't understand it. — Oh, there's the bell." And Dick dismissed the subject which has puzzled wiser heads than his.

CHAPTER XV

‘DADDY dear’ wrote that Anne might stay with any of the cousins she chose and it was taken for granted that she would go to The Roost as soon as Cousin Polly went away. Mrs. Osborne had planned to remain at Larkland a day or two after her husband left, in order to clean and close the house. She was detained and house-bound by rain. The time, however, did not hang heavy on her hands. She packed china and books, and had furniture stored, windows washed, and floors scrubbed, till Anne thought she had never seen such a clean, bare, lonesome-looking house.

Perhaps it was because Cousin Mayo was gone, perhaps it was because the books were packed, perhaps it was because the weather kept her from Happy Acres, perhaps — whatever the reason, for the

first time and all at once, Anne took great interest in domestic affairs. She swept the floors that were always clean. She dusted the dustless rooms. And instead of lingering after school to play with Patsy and Ruth and Dumpling, she hurried home to 'help' Chrissy in the kitchen.

"Chrissy," she said one afternoon, "show me, please, how to make good coffee. Cousin Giles says his cook makes the dishwatery kind."

"Heap o' folks do. I make coffee what is coffee," said Chrissy, proudly.

"Please teach me," said Anne. "I want to know how to make good everyday things, — biscuits and batterbread and those muffins that are so light they topple over in the pan. Cold bread is so tiresome."

"You talk like you gwine to housekeep," laughed Chrissy. "Huccome you want know sich things, Miss Anne?"

"Oh, just because," said Anne. — "I can make cup cake. Cousin Polly taught

me that. And I know how to make candy. Cousin Giles said those pop-corn



MARY LANE SPILLER

“‘CHRISSEY, SHOW ME, PLEASE, HOW TO MAKE GOOD COFFEE’”

balls were delicious and he has another little bag of pop-corn for me. — Now tell me how to make coffee.”

“You grind de coffee,” said Chrissy, “an’ you put it in de coffee-pot.”

“How much?” asked Anne.

“’Pends on how much coffee you want,” said Chrissy.

“Well, say for one person,” suggested Anne.

“Lawzee!” said Chrissy. “I aint know how to cook for one. We-all aint nuver cook dat stintin’. Thar’s always de house folks an’ de cook an’ you want ’nough lef’ over, case extry folks come in’bout mealtime. You don’t count folks. You jest medzure light for few folks an’ heavy for a heap.”

“S’posing it’s a few folks then,” said Anne; “how many spoonfuls must I put?”

“Shuh, Miss Anne! I aint nuver spooned up no coffee. I pour it out de coffee-mill — dis-a-way — an’ den pour in de water.”

Anne carefully measured the coffee that Chrissy had put in the pot. “Four spoonfuls,” she said. “Four. Now, how many cups of water?”

“Cups ? cups o’ water ?” echoed Chrissy. “You reckon I medzure water, Miss Anne ? I wouldn’t live wid nobody dat’s so stingy as to ax me to medzure water. W’y, I pour it in de pot — ’bout dis much to dat coffee — an’ if I got more coffee, I pour in more water.”

“Oh,” said Anne, watching her. “Well, I think I can make it now in this coffee-pot. But I’d have to learn over again for another one.”

“Yap’m,” agreed Chrissy, cheerfully ; “o’ cou’sse. An’ sometimes yo’ hand gits out for cookin’ an’ you can’t do nothin’ wid no pot till yo’ hand gits in agin.”

“But if you measure and put the same things every time —” began Anne.

“Naw’m,” said Chrissy. “Cookin’ you got to trus’en to luck. An’ your hand gits out.”

Chrissy, as may be supposed from these directions, was not a good teacher, but Cousin Polly, pleased with Anne’s interest

in cooking, came to the rescue and gave some simple recipes. Anne was very proud of her first panful of biscuits, that Chrissy said were "good 'nough to set on ole miss's 'hogany table."

Learning to cook was so interesting that Anne was almost sorry to see the carriage come one morning for Cousin Polly. Cousin Persilla had sent in spite of the rain, the driver said, because her rheumatism was worse. The streams were so high that he had had to come the roundabout ridge road. It would not be possible to ford Tinkling and drive through The Village, in order to leave Anne at The Roost.

"Then," said Mrs. Osborne, hesitatingly, "I'd better take you to Mattoax with me. There's no telling when I can send you back to The Village — in this weather, over these roads."

Anne looked ready to cry. She didn't want to go to Mattoax. And she did want to go to school. She had been crossing

Tinkling every day on the high foot-log near the mill. She could cross there this morning. And she could go to a cousin's after school, by herself. Please and please and please !

Cousin Polly yielded. "Van will bring your trunk as soon as he can ford Tinkling Water," she said. "Chrissy must go with you as far as the mill and see you safe across the log."

When they reached the mill, Anne handed a box to Chrissy. "Take this in the mill," she said. "Hide it under the settee in the living-room. It's a surprise for Cousin Giles."

Then she tripped across the log, looking down in amazement at the foam-capped torrent. Could this be little Tinkling that a week before crept lazily along between the alders, the topmost branches of which now looked like seaweed on the water ? What a mad, swift stream it was, with the waters from the steep hills and the long sloping

fields raging down its channel. And the rain was not over. The mid-morning brought a heavy downpour. When it ceased, the clouds still hung low and heavy.

Mrs. Wilson dismissed school at noon. Several of the children had to cross Tinkling Water and she feared more rain would put the stream above the foot-logs.

"Where's Anne?" asked Mrs. Osborne, when Patsy came into the chamber, saying there would be no school that afternoon.

"Anne?" said Patsy. "Why, she's at Larkland, you know, mother, till Cousin Polly goes away."

"But — didn't Anne tell you? — Polly's gone," said Mrs. Osborne. "Chrissy came an hour or two ago to bring Anne's bag. Polly went to Persilla's this morning."

"Anne didn't say one word about it," said Patsy, looking hurt. "I reckon she's going to spend the night with Ruth. But I think she might have told me."

The boys came in and there was the usual

rainy-day turmoil. It was even worse than usual — or so it seemed to Patsy who was out of humor. At last, she appealed to her mother.

“Please make Dick stop calling me ‘donkey,’” she said pettishly. “He keeps on doing it. Just because I missed my geography lesson and he happened to know his.”

“Dick,” said Mrs. Osborne, “you must not call your sister names. If you aren’t a little gentleman, you’ll never be a big one, you know. Now, if you call Patsy ‘donkey,’ again, I shall punish you.”

The suggestion or the threat kept Dick on his good behavior till Patsy made a bad play in their game of parcheesi. “Oh, you —” he remembered and stopped just in time — “he-haw, he-haw, he-haw !” He dropped on all fours and pranced across the room, kicking at a chair and throwing an imaginary rider. “You — he-haw-aw !”

“Dick !” said his mother.

"I beg pardon, mother," he said. "I did not say 'donkey.'"

"He-haw's the same as donkey," complained Patsy, "only worse."

"Dick," said his mother, severely, "you shall not be so rude. Now remember, if you say one word that means 'donkey,' I am going to punish you."

Dick was quiet awhile, poring over *Treasure Island*. Looking up as he turned a page, he caught Patsy's eye and, his own twinkling, he put his outspread hands behind his ears and flapped them back and forth like a donkey. Patsy tilted her chin and pretended not to see.

Dick was tired reading and a mischievous, teasing spirit possessed him. He busied himself with paper and scissors, then he crept behind Patsy and dropped on her book a paper figure of a forlorn-looking donkey.

"You're a horrid boy," Patsy flared. "You've been 'donkeying' me all after noon. Mother made you stop saying 'donkey'."

and then you he-hawed at me. She said you shouldn't he-haw and then you flapped your ears, — and now you poke this horrid picture under my nose.”

Mrs. Osborne's eyes laughed but she kept her voice sober and said reprovingly, “Dick !”

“Now, mother,” Dick hastened to defend himself, “I've obeyed you as obedient as could be. You told me not to call Patsy ‘donkey’ any more — and I didn't; you told me not to he-haw at her — and I didn't; but you never one single time told me not to flop my ears and not to draw pictures — and that's all I did.”

Mr. Osborne, who had just come in, laughed outright. “My dear, he has kept the strict letter of the law,” he said.

“But not its spirit,” said Mrs. Osborne. “And I shall have to punish him.”

Seeing the set of her mouth, Dick knew it was useless to try to beg off. He spoke quickly. “If I got to be punished, I

think father ought to be the one. I — I'm getting too big for mother to punish. Father," he confided in an undertone, "you can whip easy and I'll holler loud."

"Let him off this time, please, mother," said Patsy, "and next time — if there is any next time — you can give him two whippings. Dick's always teasing and worrying somebody. I 'spect that was why Anne went home with Ruth, 'stead of coming with me."

"There's Ruth now. Coming here," said Sweet William who was looking out of the window.

"And by herself," said Patsy. "I wonder where Anne is."

CHAPTER XVI

RUTH dropped her raincoat in the porch and ran into the chamber.

“Oh, C-cousin Miranda, mayn’t Patsy c-come with me ?” she said excitedly. “L-let all the children come. We’re g-going to the hilltop to see Tinkling. It’s l-like a river. Every one’s going.”

“Is it over the foot-log ?” asked one of the children.

“Over the l-log !” exclaimed Ruth. “I reckon that old log’s in Roanoke River by now. Why, it’s j-j-just raging.”

The boys ran to get their coats and Patsy scrambled into the old striped cloak that she called ‘the Pied Piper.’ She and Ruth and Sweet William huddled together under ‘Old Dog Tray.’

Ruth paused a minute. “Where’s Anne ?” she asked. “Doesn’t she want to go, too ?”

“Anne!” exclaimed Patsy. “Why, I thought she was at your home.”

“I haven’t seen her s-since school,” said Ruth. “Father said Van told at the p-post-office that Cousin Persilla’s carriage came for Cousin Polly this morning. We th-thought of course Anne came home with you.”

“And I was sure she was with you,” said Patsy. “She must have gone home with Dumpling.”

“Yes,” said Ruth. “Isn’t that queer? Dumpling isn’t her specialest friend, l-like you and me.”

“No, but she’s bound to be with Dump-ling,” said Patsy. “There’s nobody else. Let’s go by for them.”

But Dumpling had not seen Anne since school. She did not even know Cousin Polly had gone to Mattoax.

Mr. Blair, looking slightly worried, said he would find Anne if he had to go to every house in The Village. But after he went

to every house, Anne still was not found. No one had seen her that afternoon.

“There’s no cause to be uneasy,” Mr. Blair said to every one and every one said to him. “None at all. The child wouldn’t have tried to go back to Larkland. Of course not, with Polly away. She’s been overlooked somewhere. There’s no cause to be uneasy.”

But they were uneasy. They were anxious. They were — when The Village had been searched again and again in vain — they were miserable. They gathered in little groups on the hillside that looked toward Larkland or took shelter in the church porch, and watched the swollen stream, wondering — what no one would put in words.

At last Sweet William, looking fearfully at the raging waters and vaguely troubled about Anne, began to wail aloud: “That old awful big water’s tooken Anne and she’s gone, all gone, go-o-one!”

"It begins to seem — The child may be right," said Mr. Blair, gravely.

"Good Lord forbid!" said Mr. Tavis, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Take that child home," said Rodney Osborne, sharply. "I — we cannot stand that. Anne's safe somewhere. We've got to find her."

He had come to The Village that morning to pay off some workmen and, as soon as he learned that Anne was missing, he led another house-to-house search.

"Of course, she didn't go — didn't try to go back to Larkland," he said, almost fiercely, looking at the torrent that covered the pathway. "Think — think, you children that played with her, where would she go?"

"The mill, perhaps," Patsy said between sobs. "She's dearly devoted to Cousin Giles. She stops there every day. Maybe, she went back to see him. Maybe, she's there."

Mr. Osborne and half-a-dozen other men hurried to the edge of the stream which was widening every minute. They could see Mr. Spotswood in his shirt sleeves going to and fro, carrying grist upstairs to be safe from the threatening flood. But the rain and the rushing stream overbore their voices though they called to him again and again. At last, coming to the door to look at the rising water, he saw them and waved his hand.

“Have — you — seen — Anne ?” shouted Mr. Blair.

“Not to-day,” he called back.

They looked at one another in silent misery. Had she, after all, started back to Larkland ? She had not arrived there, said Van who had left home the middle of the afternoon. Could she have started and — They looked at the mad torrent and trembled.

“She’s somewhere safe. She must be,” said Rodney Osborne, stubbornly. “Lark-

land — every nook and corner — the premises — must be searched. Get the best men and horses — any price — to go up the hills and head this cursed stream.”

“Men are saddling horses now,” said Mr. Blair. “They’re going to her schoolmates in the country. And on to Larkland. For love of the child. Money’s nothing now. If you would like to go, Rodney, my horse is the best and —”

“No.” Rodney Osborne shook his head. “She was seen last in The Village. All news will come here. Any minute we may find — she must be safe, somewhere.” He shuddered and looked down the stream where men were walking to and fro, eying the rubbish caught in eddies here and there. If Anne had tried to cross the log and fallen —

In the late afternoon, the sullen clouds drew closer to the drenched earth. It was beginning to rain again.

Mr. Osborne turned away. He could

not bear to meet the eyes in which he saw reflected his own fears. Hardly knowing where he went, he followed a path along the hill-crest and through the woods, and came out in a clearing — Happy Acres. There was the arbor in which Anne had taken such delight, the roses that she had tied to the lattice, the jonquils that she had loved and tended, David's ploughed acre in which she had been so generously interested. Tears came to Mr. Osborne's eyes.

Busy with shrewd money-making, he had grown more and more estranged from his cousins in the slow, quiet Village. Then Anne had come and met him with trusting affection. Till this misery of suspense about her, he had not realized how she had won his heart. And now, alas ! —

But even now there might be news of her. So thinking, he turned in the dreary twilight, and hurried back to The Village. From a group in the church porch, Red

Mayo Osborne came forward and his sad face answered the unspoken question.

“Not yet.” Mayo Osborne tried to speak cheerily. “I was waiting for you, Sand,” he said, using the nickname of their boyhood. “Come home with me. Miranda has hot coffee for you. And you must get into dry clothes. Come. There’ll be news of her soon.”

But no news came. The horsemen rode back without tidings. The angry waters revealed no trace of the missing child. And the long night of rain and heartache wore away.

CHAPTER XVII

THE mill hands were taking holiday that rainy day, and Mr. Spotswood was alone in the mill. It was a slack season with little grist on hand, and this was fortunate, for if the water rose above a crooked sycamore branch near the door — called ‘the danger mark’ — the grist must be carried upstairs. A dozen times since Mr. Spotswood had been miller, the flood had driven him to this task. Twice the water had risen so high that the grist had to be carried into the loft.

At present, however, there was nothing to do except to wait and watch the water. Mr. Spotswood got out his account books. How little money he had saved in all these years! There had been his and David’s living expenses, and he had made it a part of the day’s work to see that poor neighbors

had sufficient grist. He must save more, if David were to go to college. Save more ! He glanced down-stream and sighed. After that new mill began work, his savings would be smaller than ever.

He threw aside his ledger and took up a book ; but even his beloved Horace failed to hold his wandering thoughts. So he lighted his pipe and walked about the mill. The water was rising. Well, let the flood come. How many times it had come and gone, leaving the old mill as unmoved as the hill beyond !

He paused to look at a roughly-lettered stone set in the rock wall. "This mill was finished building by Hugh Giles Osborne his men, 8 June, in year of our Lord 1764, ye third year of his gracious majesty King George III."

Under the stone, the oaken door timbers were charred ; Tarleton's soldiers pausing here, on their way to Yorktown and defeat, had fired the mill because its owner, son

of the Hugh Giles Osborne who built the mill, was fighting with Washington against his "gracious majesty." The heavy timbers burned slowly and when the redcoats rode away the fire was easily put out. Peaceful years followed. Then again came war. Along that highway, marched soldiers in blue, coming the long way from Georgia. Then, footsore, heartsore, in defeated gray, its master came back to work in the old mill.

And was the mill now near the end of its long, honorable service? Soon, that new mill would be at work and there would be more and more idle days for the old one until —

Well, the water was rising. It was near the danger mark. It was time to put aside idle thoughts and get to work. First, Mr. Spotswood went into the living-room to get some food, — cold meat, bread, baked sweet potatoes, a pitcher of milk from the shelf. He would have had a surprise and a

better luncheon, if he had opened the basket under the settee — but he did not even see it. After his hurried luncheon, he carried bag after bag of meal and flour to the upper story. It was tiresome work and he stopped at last to rest. Going to the door to observe how fast the water was rising, he saw a group of men on the hill, separated from him by the swift, noisy stream. They were hallooing to him and at last he made out the words.

“Have — you — seen — Anne?”

“Not to-day,” he answered, wondering uneasily why they asked.

The tumult of waters drowned their explaining words and he went back to work, worried and troubled. After the last bagful of meal was carried upstairs, he went into the loft. Why, what could this mean? The book on the corn pile, — it was Anne’s beloved *Pilgrim’s Progress*. It was not there when he came to the loft that morning. He was sure of that. Anne must have been

in the mill, stopping there on her way to Larkland. It was strange she did not come to speak to him. He could have told her — why, the flat beyond the mill had been impassable since mid-morning.

He picked up the *Progress* and a little note-book dropped out. In it Anne had written in her painstaking child script, the recipes for the dishes she had learned to cook. On the first page, were directions for making "Pop-corn Ball Candy" and under it was written, "Good, Cousin Giles says."

How came that book there? Where was Anne? Why had he not kept on questioning till he found out something from The Village people? He would do that now. He hurried to the mill door, but now there was no one on the hill beyond. He stood at the door a long time, hallooing and watching for some one whom he could question. But there was no one. Twilight came and night settled down.

With a start, Mr. Spotswood realized how rapidly the water had risen. It was lapping the very door-sill. He would have to take refuge upstairs and he must carry provisions with him, for the flood might keep him a prisoner for hours or even days.

He lighted a lantern, crossed the entry, and opened the living-room door. Then, he stood stock-still in amazement. The room — why, it was not at all as he had left it. It had been swept and dusted and the table was set with covers for two. There was a handful of wild flowers in a broken cup and a plate of cake with a napkin over it. On the stove were the coffee-pot and some covered pans.

“Well!” exclaimed Mr. Spotswood, “well! Who on earth did this?”

He looked around the room but no one was to be seen. Then he uncovered the pans and looked in, as if one of them might contain the good fairy who had prepared his supper, — but he found only some slices



"THERE, UNDER THE EDGE OF THE TABLE,
WAS A CHILD FAST ASLEEP"

of broiled meat, some creamed potatoes, and a sauce for the cake.

“Well, well, well! What on earth —” he began, helplessly puzzled. Just then he stumbled against something on the floor. He lowered his lantern. There, under the edge of the table, was a child fast asleep.

“Anne,” he exclaimed. “Anne, honey!” He gathered her in his arms.

“Why doesn’t Cousin Giles come?” she said sleepily. Then she opened her eyes. “Oh, it is you,” she said. “You were so slow coming. I tried to keep supper warm.”

“Child, child, how came you here?” he asked, his voice trembling.

“Why, I just came,” she said. “Daddy dear said I might stay with any of the cousins I chose. And I chose you. I like the mill. And you are all by your lonesome. Didn’t you say you wished you had a little girl like me? So I’m here.” She nestled

comfortably in his arms. He held her close and kissed her. "Why, your cheek is all wet," she exclaimed. "Have you been out in the rain?"

"Honey, I've been so miserable about you," he said. "They missed you this afternoon. They called and asked if I knew where you were. And I didn't."

"I crept in like a mouse," she said. "I didn't want you to know till supper was ready, for a surprise. I stayed in the loft and read. Then I came here and cooked supper. I brought the cake in my basket but I made the sauce. I hid under the table and, I reckon, I went to sleep."

"I wish I could let the cousins know you are here," he said. "They are — oh, I know how miserable they are."

"Why, no," said Anne. "I left a note saying where I was. I didn't like to tell myself. Patsy thought I was going to stay with her and Ruth wanted me, too. So I wrote a note. I wrapped it around the

silver dollar I gave Van for a parting gift. I wrote he was to tell Cousin Miranda this afternoon."

Mr. Spotswood laughed. "Oh, child, child!" he said. "Why, Van can't read. Nor Chrissy."

"I never thought of that," said Anne, laughing, too.

There was nothing to do but to take comfort in the thought that Anne was safe, whether people knew it or not. So she and Cousin Giles ate their belated supper. Then he carried her upstairs — by this time, the water was several inches deep in the mill-room — and put her on his four-poster bed, telling her to go to sleep; he had a day's work to do that night.

Weary hour after hour he toiled, carrying the grist up the steep steps to the loft. The water was rising steadily. He pulled off his shoes, crept into his room so as not to awaken Anne, and took from the walls three or four dingy old portraits, a flint-lock

that had been used at Brandywine, and the rifle his father had carried from Manassas to Appomattox. These, his books, clothing, and the few articles of furniture that were light enough for him to handle, he carried up to the loft. Then, he dropped down on an old settee to rest.

It seemed to him he had not been there five minutes, when he was awakened by a thudding noise. He jumped up and looked about. In the gray dawn light, he could see that the water had risen till it was only three or four feet below him. The sound that he heard was of floating bins and barrels, thumping against the floor below.

He awakened Anne, gathered up her bed, and carried it to the loft.

Anne ran excitedly from one window to another.

"Oh, Cousin Giles, Cousin Giles!" she exclaimed. "Look at that log. Look at that tree. See that piece of a hen-house

with the old rooster on it. Oh, the water is carrying away everything! Everything but the mill. Just suppose —”

“Don’t be frightened, dear,” he said. “There’s the silver plate, the old flood mark, far above our heads. And the water is far, far below us still.”

He picked out some boards, however, and began nailing them together to form a raft. Not that he expected to need it, but it was as well to have it ready. Why, he wondered, hadn’t he secured the boat from the mill-pond. Next time he would — he checked himself with a laugh. He might wait a hundred years for another such flood.

Going to the window to look at the rising water, Mr. Spotswood saw people on the hill beyond.

“She’s here! Safe, safe, safe! She’s here!” he shouted at the top of his voice. Then he turned to Anne. “I’m going to put you in this window, dear,” he said. “I’ll hold you steady. Wave your handkerchief.”

What a cheer, what a huzza rang above the noise of the waters ! Safe, safe, Anne was safe ! The tidings came as a blessed relief from the fresh anxiety caused by Anne's note to Van. For the note had been read at last.

Van, telling for the twentieth time what a 'mannerable chile' little Miss Anne was, displayed for the twentieth time the silver dollar she had given him. David noticed writing on the paper wrapped around the coin.

"What's on that paper ?" he asked.

"Hit's jes' de piece o' paper Miss Anne wropped 'roun' de money to take keer on it," said Van.

"That's Anne's writing," said David. "Let me see it." And he read the note.

"Van," so Anne wrote, "please you tell Cousin Miranda I'm going to Cousin Giles's to visit. Tell her this afternoon. Tell her I'm going to visit all the cousins some. I'm going to Cousin Giles's first,

for he is lonesome. I wish you luck. From A. M. L.”

Mr. Spotswood and Anne settled down to make the best of being flood-bound. They breakfasted on the remains of their supper and Cousin Giles said the coffee, even cold, was a help to him since it was not the dishwatery kind.

“It’s more the soupy kind,” said Anne, doubtfully. “I — I don’t know why it’s so thickish. Chrissy says ‘sometimes your hand gets out at cooking.’ I reckon that’s it, don’t you?”

“I reckon so,” agreed Cousin Giles.

“Well,” said Anne, merrily, “it doesn’t matter whether my hand is in or out for cooking, now your kitchen is like a little piece of the Atlantic Ocean. — Oh, Cousin Giles, I am going to play this loft is an uninhabited island and I am Robinson Crusoe. Do you mind being my man Friday that’s building a boat?” The game was so interesting that Anne was sorry when

Cousin Giles said, with an expression of relief, that the water was standing still. Soon, it would begin to go down.

“Oh, we are having such a good time!” she said regretfully. “And it would be so nice to go over the tree-tops in a boat, like those old-time mill people did.”

Going to the east window to look out, she called suddenly and excitedly, “Look, look, Cousin Giles! Oh, see — the new building is gone!”

It was true. The flimsy frame structure had gone to pieces in the flood. The eddies and backwater floated its timbers to the very door of the stanch old mill.

“Oh, Cousin Giles, Cousin Giles!” said Anne, “it’s all washed away, isn’t it? Lease and all!”

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER the freshet, Anne went to stay with her cousins at The Roost. Mr. Spotswood said they would take better care of her than he could, and she and Patsy were to come on Saturdays to practise their cooking on him.

Anne was happily sure that all the mill trouble was at an end, washed down-stream with the new building. Mr. Spotswood did not tell her that he was not so certain about that. Vague rumors came to him that Chandan, disappointed at the loss of the mill so nearly ready for his use, was urging Mr. Osborne to erect another, offering more favorable terms for a second building than had been agreed on for the first.

After their quarrel, Mr. Spotswood could not have asked about the matter, even if Mr. Osborne had been in The Village.

And for several weeks he was not there. He was busy in his law office with the work that had piled up during his frequent visits to Larkland.

He found time, however, to send letters to Anne. Usually, these were brief notes, accompanying gifts, — sometimes boxes of fruit or candy, sometimes jewelry and articles of dress absurdly unsuited to her age. Cousin Miranda went into peals of laughter over a rhinestone hair ornament and pink satin slippers with heels two inches high.

“Of course, I can’t wear them now, but isn’t it nice to have them?” said Anne. “They are so pretty. It’s so lovely to have them to look at.”

She, in her turn, wrote letters which were read with unfailing interest. She did hope Cousin Rodney would come back to The Village soon, soon, soon, she wrote one day in late April. There was so much to show him at Happy Acres. He wouldn’t

believe it, but it really was lovelier than ever.

The candy he sent her was delicious. They had a picnic with it, in the rose arbor. Dick said it was the only time in his life he had had as many chocolate almonds as he could eat; he wanted one more but he couldn't eat it. Cousin Miranda said Sweet William ate too many. Sweet William said it wasn't the candy that made him sick; he reckoned he ate too much hominy for breakfast. They had a lovely time. It was so good of Cousin Rodney to send the candy — and such a big boxful. He was always doing something lovely and generous.

Mr. Osborne looked thoughtful as he re-read these words. The child admired and trusted him now — but what about later? Would she — unbidden, Giles Spotswood's words came to mind — would she, too, despise him as 'a grasping old skinflint'?

He frowned and pushed aside an unfinished letter to Chandan.

"It can wait," he said to himself, "at least, till she goes away. She needn't —



"WOULD SHE, TOO, DESPISE HIM AS 'A GRASPING OLD SKINFLEET' "

needn't be worried about it. It can wait awhile."

During those April days, the Black Mayo Osbornes were sadly missed from the

small, cordial, cousinly Village. As Black Mayo himself once said, each person in The Village had his own place and if one dropped out it left a hole there was no one else to fill. And without him, the place seemed smaller and duller.

“By dogs, it’s downright lonesome without Black Mayo,” said Mr. Blair one day, as he wrapped a package for Anne. “It put life in The Village to know he might any minute come galloping down the road on Rosinante, ready to spin a yarn about the Atlantic Ocean, if you offered him a gourd of water. And you sat in your chair and saw it all.”

“He was always ready with vivid speech,” said Red Mayo. “What an excellent lawyer he would have made !”

“To hear him was good as a newspaper, ’thout the trouble o’ reading,” wheezed old Mr. Tavis to whom the printed page had never ceased to be a burden.

“The Village is a mighty nice place to

go away from," Anne said thoughtfully, when she went back to The Roost.

Cousin Miranda looked surprised.

"I mean," Anne went on, "it's lovely to stay here, but it's so comfortable to go away and know people aren't fault-finding behind your back. Mrs. Callahan used to say she'd stay till midnight any place before she'd go away and leave Mrs. Flannagan behind her. But here — why, everybody has a good word for Cousin Polly and Cousin Mayo, even" — Anne thought of Miss Fanny Morrison's tart speeches — "even people who said sharp things to their faces."

"Oh, of course. We're all cousins, you know," Mrs. Osborne said, as if that explained it.

"And descendants of Pocahontas." Anne tossed her head with pride.

"Yes." Mrs. Osborne looked hard at Anne. "But it isn't nice to talk about that."

“Oh !” Anne’s eyes were wide open. “Why, I’ve heard everybody here say so, except the Tavisés that aren’t. I didn’t know about it till I came here. I—I thought it was nice.”

“Nice in one way. Yes, we like it.” Mrs. Osborne was rather at a loss how to explain. “There’s a way to say things. If you just happen to mention it, that’s all right. But to boast of family or speak as if you’re proud of any one kin to you, that’s — not nice.” She made the mild conclusion seem very ill-bred.

Anne considered. “But you — we are proud of it.”

Mrs. Osborne laughed. “I reckon we are. But we don’t say so.”

“O-oh !” Anne looked puzzled and turned to another side of the subject. “Doesn’t it seem queer for Cousin Giles that’s a miller and Cousin Polly that hates outdoors and Cousin Will Blair that sells soap and starch, to be descended from an

Indian princess that wore a mantle of pigeon feathers and is in the history book ? But, I reckon, they are descended from lots of other people besides Pocahontas.”

Mrs. Osborne laughed and agreed. “Now, Anne,” she said, “will you find David ? I can’t imagine what he’s done with his heavy coat and his blue suit. I am getting the woollens together to put in Agnes Wilson’s cedar closet.” There was so little store-room at The Roost that out-of-season things rested on borrowed shelves in spacious Broad Acres House.

David came unwillingly. “Aw ! it doesn’t matter about those old clothes,” he grumbled.

“Why, David Spotswood !” said Mrs. Osborne. “They’re all the winter things you have. Get them at once for Emma to clean. I want to put things away and have that task off hands.” She glanced longingly at the table where was *Quentin Durward* with a scrap of blue gingham marking her place.

"I'm going to have new clothes next winter. My corn'll bring money to buy them. I don't need those," argued David, standing stock-still.

"My dear!" It was a tone that required obedience.

"Well, I can't bring them," David blurted out. "For I haven't got them. I sold them. To Van. For fertilizer. To go under my corn."

Dick looked up from the *Arabian Nights*, whistled, and made expressive gestures.

"Shut up!" said David. "I'll not get a whipping. I've not disobeyed. I've not told a story. I just sold my own clothes for fertilizer to put on my own corn crop."

Falsehood and disobedience were the family whipping-offences and certainly David was not guilty of either. He had told the truth promptly and he had not disobeyed Mrs. Osborne—for it had never any more occurred to her to forbid the selling of his clothes than to say he must not

wear them wrong side out; now, however, she explained that serious consequences would follow his selling anything else, without her consent.

As David went to Sunday School the next morning, he was thinking, I grieve to say, more about his corn acre than about the Shorter Catechism. It was a mild, fair day and the land was in excellent order. The day before, he had tried in vain to get a horse to harrow his field. After the wet weather, every horse in the little farming community was busy, preparing land for belated crops. Of what use was the fertilizer for which he had given his clothes, thought David gloomily, if he could not get a horse to work his crop?

“Mawnin’, suh, little boss,” said a cheery voice.

David looked up. There was a buggyful of people coming from The Back Way into The Street. Cross-Eyed Tom and his wife Susan, arrayed in Sunday finery,

were on the seat, with Susan Emma between them, Betty Bessy at their feet, and Amos hanging on behind.

“Good morning, you all,” said David; then he exclaimed, “Well, I declare!” and hailed the driver. “Tom, Tom, uh Tom!”

“Suh, little boss?” Tom halted, grinning amiably.

“Nothing. It’s Sunday. Tom, I want to see you first thing in the morning, about some special business. Come early. Before school time. You be sure to come.”

“Yas, suh, little boss; yas, suh. Certain sho’ I will.” Tom urged the horse with the whip, held her up with the lines, and trotted down The Street.

Why on earth, David wondered, as he proceeded with brisker pace and lighter heart, hadn’t he thought before of Cross-Eyed Tom’s horse? She was not a promising-looking work horse. But if she could pull that buggyful of people, she could draw a light harrow across a corn field.

Tom had bought her at auction the autumn before for five dollars. Mr. Blair said that Tom could have bought her for a dollar — or fifty cents, for that matter; no one else would bid for a creature that was so old and gaunt and raw-boned that it looked more like a hat-rack than a horse. Tom grinned and replied that he wouldn't 'demean' any horse by bidding less for it than five dollars; he had always wanted a pleasure horse — which he called a 'pleasure hawse' — like old Mr. Colonel Payne's, and he named his new possession after the Colonel's Flying Lady.

Tom's steed looked as little as possible like a 'pleasure hawse' or a 'flying lady.' She was a flea-bitten gray, blind in one eye, with a straight neck and a Roman nose. Her stifle joint was out of place and this gave a peculiarity of gait which procured for her the nickname, Hippity Hop. No one, except possibly Cross-Eyed Tom, expected Hippity Hop to live till Christmas,

but she survived the winter. And Tom, who left his wife to buy bread for their children, actually worked at odd jobs to provide corn and fodder for his 'pledzure hawse,' until spring when Hippy Hop was expected to pick up a living on grass.

As a great and special favor to David, Tom agreed to hire the horse, and on Monday afternoon, he brought her to Happy Acres, hitched her to a harrow, and started her off. But when he gave the plough-lines to David, Hippy Hop loitered, paused, came to a full stop.

"And when she does move, she walks so slow she wobbles," complained David. "You have to sight by a tree to see if she's moving."

"Flying Lady aint usened to goin' of herse'f; she usened to my makin' her go," explained Tom, with dignity. "You aint had 'nough sperunce, little boss."

"I'm getting it," grunted David, drawing his grimy hand across his moist brow.



MARY LANE CHILL

"SHE GATHERED A TEMPTING HANDFUL OF GRASS TO TOLE HER
ALONG".

He sturdily refused, however, Cross-Eyed Tom's good-natured offer of help. "I jes' soon harrow dat lan' as not. I don't mind wu'kin' when I aint got to," said Tom.

"Thank you, I must do it myself," David explained. "That's the Corn Club rule."

Anne came from her garden to the rescue. She gathered a tempting handful of grass and dangled it before Hippy Hop to tole her along. At the end of the row, that tidbit was given to the hungry beast and another was plucked. Thus they went back and forth across the field until David gained the lacking 'sperunce,' and could manage plough-lines and harrow-handles and say 'Get up, you brute!' as fiercely as Tom himself.

CHAPTER XIX

IT was well for David to be interested in his corn acre, Mrs. Wilson said gravely, but it must not take time that his lessons needed. Did he realize that his class standing was getting lower and lower? Did he realize that his marks were 'poor' instead of 'good' or even 'fair'?

David promised to study harder. For a day or two, he did; then again he dropped toward the foot of his classes. At last, he failed on his history and was kept after school to recite the lesson over, — on the very afternoon that he was going to harrow his land and prepare it for planting. One by one, the other pupils went out, leaving him with his book open before him.

"Can you recite that lesson now, David?" Mrs. Wilson asked as calmly as if there was no corn field awaiting him.

"I hope so." David's voice was not hopeful. He refreshed his memory by a hasty glance at the page.

"Describe the condition of the Jamestown colony in 1610," said Mrs. Wilson.

"It was very bad. And the management of affairs was governed very bad. And the people were bad off. And they were hungry. And the time was called the Starving Time. And most of the people died and kept getting smaller and smaller."

Mrs. Wilson's mouth twitched. "You mean the colony kept getting smaller," she suggested.

"Yessum." David knit his brow, trying to think how the next lines looked in the book. "And there was a good governor named Argall." Mrs. Wilson frowned. "No. No. He was a bad governor. And there was another governor. There were two governors. I know there are four in this lesson but I can't remember one from another," he confessed helplessly.

Mrs. Wilson began to correct exercises. David opened his book and fixed his eyes on the troublesome paragraph.

“‘Sir Thomas Gates and Sir Thomas Dale’ — glad they were both Thomases — ‘came over from England and under their severe and able rule the colony improved and the culture of tobacco began.’” He looked away from the book and rattled off: “Sir Thomas Gale and Sir Thomas Dates came to England and under their severe, unable rule the colony improved and the use of tobacco began.—Wonder if Tom remembered to bring the harrow? Gee! I ought to be there at work this minute. — Sir Thomas Date and Sir Thomas Gale came to England and began to rule severe unable and had their company use tobacco.”

“Well, David?” Mrs. Wilson put aside the last exercise.

“Oh, Cousin Agnes,” David said, “I’ve read this paragraph over nine times. Please let me go.”

“You may have read it nine times with your lips and still know nothing about it. You must fix your mind on your lessons, David.”

David squirmed. “Honestly, Cousin Agnes, I am trying. But I can’t think of anything except what good order that field is in and Tom’s old ‘pledzure hawse’ is standing there idle. It takes every cent I can rake and scrape to pay for it. Please, Cousin Agnes, keep me in to-morrow — keep me in both recesses and after school, too, if you want to, — but please let me go now.”

“David ! I don’t want to keep you in, child. But — listen, dear ! It’s the desire of your father’s heart for you to have an education. He had to put aside his books because his father needed him in the mill. Now, he is hoping and planning for you to do what he wanted to and couldn’t. I don’t know how his plans will work out” — Mrs. Wilson looked worried, for she had

heard more than had reached the children's ears about the prospect of a new mill — "but you ought to try to do your part and I am going to do mine. If this Corn Club keeps on taking your attention from school work, I shall tell your father that you must withdraw from it. Now, I have warned you. I'll give you a little more time and then —" she paused and left him to face the situation. — "You may recite this lesson at recess to-morrow, David. Now, you may go."

David finished harrowing his corn land and then went to Anne's garden. A walk of flat stones made a path across the green-sward, bordered by jonquils, Japan quinces, lilacs, Missouri currants, and roses, — damask roses, burr roses, cabbage roses, cinnamon roses, velvet roses, and a dozen other fragrant, free-blooming old varieties, twined and tangled together. Anne had left them to grow in much the way nature had taken since the garden had returned to

the waste, merely removing dead wood and pruning the bushes when necessary to make rank-growing vines respect the rights of weaker neighbors.

At the end of the flagged walk was the arbor which Cousin Mayo had built to replace a decayed trellis. On its latticed sides were trained sweet-brier and Cherokee roses. It was floored with flat stones and had a seat formed by a board resting on two large stones.

The season of jonquils was almost over. There were only a few blossoms among the lancelike leaves, but the Missouri currant was thrusting out spikes of yellow blossoms, vying in fragrance with the purple lilacs.

"Oh, here are some teenchy, weenchy rose-buds," said Anne, in delighted excitement. "When the roses are in bloom, I'm going to spend every Saturday here at Happy Acres."

"But you'll not be here," Patsy reminded her. "You'll be gone with that horrid Miss Drayton."

“Aunt Sarah is lovely,” said Anne, indignantly. “When I think of it, it seems as if I can’t wait till June to see her. And think, I’m going to Mountain Lake with her and Pat and daddy dear. But I want to be here, too. I want to see my roses and David’s corn. Oh, dear! Wouldn’t it be nice if people could be in two places at one time? There are so many nice times to be in!” She laid her cheek against a yellow rosebud. “Oh, how happy it must make you to be so sweet and beautiful!” she murmured.

Ruth laughed and Alice said, “What queer things you say, Anne!”

David was not listening. “There’s dogwood in bloom,” he said, “and I heard a whip-poor-will last night; they’re signs it’s time to plant corn, Tom says. Well, that land is ready, — fine as flour and rich as cream. This is Thursday. Saturday I’ll get it planted. And as soon as the corn comes up, I’ll run a weeder over this field.

Every week, a weeder or a cultivator's got to go over it." Suddenly he frowned and uttered an impatient exclamation.

"Wh-what's the matter now?" asked Ruth.

"Nothing. I do hate history," said David.

Patsy laughed. "I should think history would hate you. Oh, the way you butcher it! You better look out. To-day when you missed your second question, Cousin Agnes looked at you — my, the way she looked!"

"I just hate history," repeated David.

"Oh," said Anne. "It's so interesting."

"Ye-es," agreed Patsy, faintly, "I suppose so. I might like it if it wasn't a lesson. But I'm like David — I hate it."

"Lessons are all hard," said David, "but history is worst; it was bad enough to drag along with short lessons. But now we are reviewing and going fast, I can't keep up with who did what. Pshaw! It's

all just stupid stuff about what dead-and-gone people did. And if I don't have better lessons, Cousin Agnes is going to ask father to make me give up my corn crop."

"Oh, David!" Anne was shocked. "You can't give up your corn. Why, you just can't. You can learn that history. Oh, you must. And it isn't stupid. It's interesting. They were real people and they did things because of other things — Argall, and Pocahontas that we're descended from." She checked herself and hastened to explain. — "I'm not saying that proud; I'm just mentioning her, you know. — The history book hasn't room to tell much about people. I'd like to know ever so much more. Sometimes, I play I'm somebody in a book. Oh, David, wouldn't that help you? I'm sure it would. We'll go over the history lesson and play we are the people in it and talk about what we are doing."

The plan was tried and proved so helpful and so entertaining that Anne and David kept it up. The other children joined in the game and the rose arbor became a little playhouse. Sometimes, it was the Powhatan's wigwam in front of which Pocahontas saved Captain Smith; sometimes, it was Washington's camp where he discussed with his generals the battles of the Revolution; sometimes, — oh! it was one scene after another in American history, with the children drawing straws to decide who should take favorite characters.

CHAPTER XX

BLACK MAYO OSBORNE said truly that in The Village disagreeable subjects, like medicine bottles, were put on the shelf and taken down only when necessary. No hint reached Anne of her elders' fears and forebodings about the mill. With her heart at ease about the matter, she was taking pleasure in the events of passing days.

One of these events was a visit from Mrs. Marshall and her son Dunlop, friends of Anne, "when I was an orphan and not a 'dopted," she explained.

Mrs. Marshall had written saying how much they wanted to see Anne; Dunlop had begged to visit her instead of going south that winter, saying "Anne was lots nicer than Florida."

Mrs. Osborne laughed over this letter, then said, "Why not ask Mrs. Marshall to

bring Dunlop here to see you, Anne? Wouldn't you like that?"

"I'd love it," said Anne, "but, Cousin Miranda, you haven't room —"

Mrs. Osborne laughed and interrupted, "Of course, there's room, dear. A house wouldn't be a home that didn't always have room for any friend who wanted to come to it. Write and say to your friends we'll be happy to have them, any time, as long as they can stay."

So the Marshalls were coming.

Now, The Roost, as we have said, had been only the 'office' of the burned-down mansion, a place for boys and guns and fishing tackle and overflow guests. It was a small cottage with a cabin near it for a kitchen. In the cottage there were only three rooms, — the dining-room, 'the bedroom' where Anne and Patsy stayed, and 'the chamber' from which opened a dressing-room where Sweet William slept. Dick and David slept upstairs in an attic

called 'the tumble-up room' because it was reached by such steep ladder-like stairs.

A place was prepared for Mrs. Marshall and Dunlop in a way that reminded Anne of changing partners in the Virginia reel. A pallet was made for Sweet William in 'the chamber,' David and Dick moved into the dressing-room, and Anne and Patsy took possession of 'the tumble-up room.' Then, Emma brought lavender-scented old linen sheets and prepared 'the bedroom' for the expected guests.

Sweet William was, I grieve to say, in a bad temper. He had set his heart on driving to the station with his father and when this was not allowed, he refused to find any pleasure in life. He took as a grievance the tidings, usually welcomed with delight, that he was to have a pallet beside his mother's bed.

In this frame of mind, he came to the table. Instead of eating his breakfast, he squirmed about, whining over and over:

“Why can’t David sleep on the pallet, mother? — Mother, why can’t David and Dick sleep on the pallet? — Why can’t I stay in my own bed, mother? — Mother, why do I have to give up my room?”

After some vain efforts to get him in a good humor, the family let him alone. It was the custom to ignore unpleasant things at meal-times, but there was a limit and Sweet William was approaching it more nearly each moment that he sat there whining, crumbing his bread and throwing bits, now on the table-cloth, now on the floor.

“Sonny, boy, eat your good turnover,” coaxed his mother. “And don’t throw crumbs on the floor.”

Sweet William scowled and his restless, wilful little fingers broke another piece of bread to fragments. These he started to scatter around him.

“William,” his father reminded him, “you have been forbidden to throw food

on the floor. If you are disobedient, I shall be obliged to punish you."

Sweet William stayed his hand. "How will you punish me?" he asked.

The other children giggled. Mrs. Osborne choked back a laugh, asked about Miss Flora MacFlimsey's health and remarked that 'she-he,' as they now called the pet fowl, would enjoy those crumbs.

Sweet William scowled at his plate and refused to be diverted. "I wish you'd say how you going to punish me," he repeated moodily.

He sat quite still awhile. Then he pinched off a crumb, squeezed and rolled it till it was a tiny dingy ball and, with a sideways glance at his father, flicked it on the floor.

Without a word, Mr. Osborne picked him up and started out of the room.

Sweet William howled. "That wasn't big 'nough to be punished for — and you is not never said how."

“Miss M’randa,” — Emma, looking after the retreating figures, forgot to hand the hot turnovers, — “I reckon, dat chile needs a dost o’ wermifuge. He don’t feel so good and dat’s what make him fractious.” Emma cherished a belief that if her mistress’s children behaved badly, they needed medicine; other people’s children were bad, ‘Miss M’randa’s’ were just ‘sick.’ “Ne’ mind,” she went on as Sweet William came sulkily back into the room; “you be all right when dat nice little boy come to play wid you, won’t you, honey boy?”

“Le’ me ’lone,” whined Sweet William.

Anne said mildly, “Dunlop’s mighty spoiled,” but her heart sank within her. What would The Roost be with spoiled, self-willed Dunlop and with Sweet William in a tantrum?

About the middle of the forenoon, Mr. Osborne returned from the station and Mrs. Marshall, stylish, languid, and amiable as ever, was welcomed and taken to her room.

Dunlop took possession of Anne, chattering about the big Florida hotel where he spent the winter, the 'gators he saw, the



"THAT'S MY SWING. GET OUT."

—BY LEO MURPHY

fruits — bananas, oranges, lemons, pineapples — that one got from outdoors instead of in shops. Then he noticed Sweet

William, hugging in his arms Miss Flora MacFlimsey, now a well-feathered young rooster.

“Howdy, boy,” said Dunlop and asked, politely for him, to be allowed to hold that rooster. Sweet William only scowled and clutched Miss Flora the tighter. Anne led Dunlop off to the swing but Sweet William followed and said, “That’s my swing. Get out. That’s my swing. Get out. That’s my swing. Get out.”

“What a funny boy!” commented Dunlop, frankly. “How many times do you say things over? I’d swing in your old swing, if I wanted to. I got a great mind to swing anyway, ’cause you’re so greedy. But I want to see that mill you wrote about, Anne, and your garden. I want to see them both — now — right away — at once.”

“Oh, Sweet William, and you can be so nice!” Anne said reproachfully.

Sweet William only scowled and Anne

started to the mill, entertaining Dunlop on the way by telling him about 'daddy dear's' promise to give her anything that she wanted for her birthday.

"What are you going to choose, Anne?" he asked eagerly. "What are you going to choose? Tell me right away."

"I don't know," said Anne. "I thought first I wanted a kitten. And then I'd like a pony. Or a ring with a beautiful red set. Or perhaps a string of gold beads would be nicer. It's hard to choose a present. And this is so important, for it's the first anything-I-want present I ever had."

"I can't see what makes you so slow 'bout thinking what you want," said Dunlop, impatiently. "'Twouldn't take me a minute. I'd have an auto'bile, a big one that runs fast and makes lots of noise — or maybe I'd like a motor-boat best. No, I wouldn't. I'd have a merry-go-round, all my own, with ponies and music."

“Your list would grow till it was long as mine,” laughed Anne. “There are dozens of things on it. Maybe I’ll choose a —”

“No, I wouldn’t choose a merry-go-round or a motor-boat,” Dunlop interrupted excitedly. “I’d have a wheel, a big wheel like that, that turns round and round and splashes the water. Say, Anne, that’s great !”

“That is the mill-wheel,” laughed Anne. “And there is Cousin Giles at the door. Come, let’s go in.”

Dunlop found the mill such a fascinating place that it was only by promising to come back in the afternoon with his mother and then go to Happy Acres that Anne prevailed on him to return to The Roost.

CHAPTER XXI

AT dinner, Dunlop asserted himself. After a mouthful of soup, he splashed his spoon in the plate and said, "I'm hot-thirsty. I want ice-cream."

His mother's face flushed. "Dearie!" she remonstrated. "Eat your good soup. Are you so thirsty? Drink this nice, cool water."

He pushed aside the glass. "I want ice-cream," he repeated. "That's what I want. I promised I wouldn't ask for what they didn't have. But they've got ice-cream, mamma. I saw it."

"Dunlop darling! The ice-cream is for after a while. After we eat the good soup and other things," coaxed Mrs. Marshall.

"I want it now. I want ice-cream." Dunlop's voice rose higher.

Sweet William, whose fretfulness had

subsided into scowling sullenness in presence of the strange lady, laid down his spoon and let his soup cool while he watched Dunlop with round-eyed amazement. Anne, Patsy, Dick, and David, home from school early for the company dinner, stared solemnly at their plates. The grown-ups tried by indifferent chatter to set Mrs. Marshall at her ease, but her cheeks turned from pink to red and Dunlop's screams drowned their voices.

"I want ice-cream!" he cried, pounding the table with his spoon. "I want ice-cream, I say! I want ice-cream."

"Do you prefer — shall Emma bring him a dish of cream?" Mrs. Osborne asked in an undertone.

"If you will be so good." Mrs. Marshall gratefully accepted the suggestion and made excuses. "I am so ashamed. Perhaps he is feverish. And hotel life is so upsetting to children."

"Emma!" Mrs. Osborne said reprovingly

aside to her servant. It was trying enough to have the young guest behave so badly, and now here was Emma neglecting her duties to scowl at Dunlop.

He scowled back. "Hurry up, you old fat thing. Hurry and bring me that ice-cream," he commanded.

Emma brought a dish of cream and set it down before Dunlop as hard as her respect for the family cut-glass would allow.

"I want a heap of ice-cream. You just brought me a little," he said angrily.

"You got more ice-cream dan you got manners," muttered Emma.

Mr. Osborne's mouth twitched. He spoke hastily to Sweet William who was sitting quite still beside his mother and staring at Dunlop with wide, unwinking eyes. "William, eat your soup if you want this wishbone."

Dunlop pushed aside the untasted cream. "I want that wishbone. I don't want ice-cream now. I want that wishbone."

“Dunlop !” His mother spoke with mild reproach. “That is little William’s. Ask Mr. Osborne to give you the wishbone of the other fowl. I am so sorry,” she apologized almost tearfully. “I think he’s a little upset. Travelling doesn’t agree with him.”

“I want that wishbone and I want this one, too. I want both wishbones,” Dunlop insisted, unashamed.

Mrs. Osborne glanced uneasily at Sweet William who always claimed a wishbone and took huge delight in tugging at it with a chosen partner. Of course, he could be compelled to give up to the little guest, but, oh, dear ! it would be hard to punish him, in face of Dunlop’s conduct. And, after all, he was such a little fellow !

Sweet William’s mild little voice relieved her anxiety. “He may have it. Dunlop may have both the two wishbones.”

Mrs. Marshall’s face grew redder than ever. “Oh !” she protested helplessly.

“What do you want, my little man?”
Mr. Osborne beamed on his small son.

“Anything you give me,” answered Sweet William’s sweetest tones.

Dunlop thrust a wishbone at him. “He may have his wishbone. If he says I may have it, I won’t take it,” he said, and the meal proceeded in peace.

As Emma helped her mistress wash the egg-shell china, she spoke her mind with the freedom of an old family servant. “Ice-cream nothin’! It’s whippin’ he’s spilin’ for. You hear him call me ‘ol’ fat thing’? You couldn’t pay little Miss Anne to say no sich impidence. Dat chile treats all folks wid a good heart. Hm! What mo’ you ’spect o’ dat boy? His mammy aint got no manners herse’f.”

“Emma,” remonstrated Mrs. Osborne, putting away the silver. “Mrs. Marshall is a very pleasant, well-mannered little lady.”

“I don’t call her no lady,” returned

Emma, positively. "Aint I hear her ax you to come to her house some Sadday and stay till Monday? A-tellin' you when to come an' when to go — like comp'ny aint got right to come when dey choose an' go when dey please," grumbled Emma, as she bore off her dishwater.

Sweet William's angelic mood lasted all afternoon. He brought forward Miss Flora MacFlimsey and let Dunlop drop the grain and watch Miss Flora peck at his fat fingers. Then he took Dunlop to his playhouse among the gnarled oak-roots and showed all his treasures, — a stone glistening with mica, six or seven shells, some bits of colored glass, a top, and some marbles.

"Haven't you got any auto'biles or 'spress wagons or little railroads?" asked Dunlop. "You could have such a good time with 'em."

"Huh! I have a good time 'thout 'em," answered Sweet William.

They went to the swing and Dunlop was

allowed to push or swing at his own sweet will. Meanwhile, the small host told how his mother whipped him when he was bad, "and my father beats me and beats me," he said proudly.

"Oh, Sweet William!" rebuked Anne, who came up during this conversation.

"That isn't a story, not a real story," said Sweet William. "I'm a-telling the truth, but — pshaw, Anne! I 'spise the old truth. It's so easy to get stretched. And, you know, something happens to me, if I don't keep my behavior at the table."

"Well," Anne turned to a more agreeable subject, "I'm glad you've been such a good boy since dinner."

"Huh!" said Sweet William, "I thought there got to be one good boy in the house."

In the afternoon, Mrs. Wilson called and Mrs. Blair came with Miss Fanny Morrison. Anne was allowed to pour the raspberry cordial and hand it with the crisp sugar wafers which Mrs. Wilson had

sent over that morning, according to the neighborly habit of The Village ladies. Whenever a guest came to a house, there was a procession of children and small maids with dishes of chicken salad, loaves of batter-yeast bread, or dessert dainties for which the senders were specially renowned.

In the late afternoon, Mrs. Marshall and Anne walked to Happy Acres. It was pleasant to loiter through the spring woods, fair with blossoming dogwood and red-bud. Mrs. Marshall rested in the rose arbor, while Anne plucked for her a nosegay of lilies-of-the-valley, now lifting white fragrant spikes among dark-green leaves.

"These people, these Village people, are charming," said Mrs. Marshall. "It's a pity they're so poor."

"Poor!" Anne echoed the word in amazement.

Mrs. Marshall was surprised at her surprise. "Poor. Of course. Very poor. You've seen enough to know that." The

tone held a memory of her own handsome home where Anne had visited. "They are charming people. Of gentle breeding. Clever and — no, not well-read."

"But they do read; they read a great deal," said Anne, eagerly; "Scott and Dickens mostly, and they talk about the people in books as if they lived at the other end of The Street."

"Oh!" Mrs. Marshall said, "but they know nothing about the books of the day." Then she returned to her first statement. "They are all poor. You — it's queer — could you live here all these months and not know that?"

"I just never thought about it," said Anne, frankly, "about money and them at the same time. They never talk about it, you know. I knew they weren't stylish and — all that, but it seems as if they want to be just like they are. I believe they do. Cousin Giles says all he wants is to be useful and comfortable."

“Cousin Giles ?”

“Cousin Giles Spotswood ; he’s David’s father ; he has the mill, you know.”

“Giles Spotswood a miller ! How can he endure it ! Why, his father owned one of the great plantations of the county and his grandfather was minister to Spain.”

“Yes,” said Anne. “He has a lot of his grandfather’s books. He loves to read. He says he wouldn’t be in Cousin Will Blair’s place for anything and have to stop reading every half-hour or so, to give a boy mail or sell a cake of soap. But Cousin Will says he has plenty of time to read the papers and he likes them better than books. He wants to know what’s going on in the world to-day.”

“He has a right to be interested in public affairs,” said Mrs. Marshall. “His father was in Congress, term after term. He was a friend of my father’s.”

“Somehow,” said Anne, thoughtfully, “things here seem different from most other places.”

Mrs. Marshall laughed. "I should think so. It's very nice for a day or two. But longer — why, it would bore me to death."

Anne looked hurt. "I think it's lovely," she declared.

"Oh, for a child like you, it's well enough," said Mrs. Marshall, "but I wouldn't live here for the world. No wonder Rodney Osborne moved away. He was buried here. By the way, he's very fond of you, Anne. He took me in to dinner the other day. He was quiet and rather dull till I happened to mention that I was coming here to visit you. He says he's seen a good deal of you this spring, has been here often — about some building, I believe. I asked if he was coming back soon and he said he thought not — except to see you before you left — till he began to rebuild a house that a freshet destroyed."

"Did he say that?" asked Anne, standing still and straight.

“Say what? Why, nothing except what I told you about rebuilding a — a mill, I think it was. Mercy, Anne! What is the matter?” asked Mrs. Marshall, staring at the child who had turned white to her lips.

“Oh, he didn’t say that!” said Anne. “I — I beg your pardon, Mrs. Marshall. You misunderstood him some way.”

“Why, child, what is the matter?” asked Mrs. Marshall, anxiously. “Oh, if it’s anything that makes you unhappy, probably I made a mistake; why, certainly I made a mistake.”

“Yes,” said Anne. “The lease is all washed away. It’s all right now. And he knows about Cousin Giles. Any one that put a mill there, would be — just what Cousin Giles said — a — a skinflint.”

“I don’t understand at all,” said Mrs. Marshall, “but I’m sure it’s all right.”

“Don’t look so queer, Anne,” said Dunlop, tugging at her hand. “I’ve told you

two times about our new auto'bile and you don't look listening at all."

All at once, Anne laughed. "What a silly little goose I was !" she said. "Why, of course, it isn't true. It's just a mistake. — Oh, Dunlop, I do beg your pardon. I'll be real listening now."

CHAPTER XXII

THE pleasant days and weeks went on, with Happy Acres, dear Happy Acres, a source of constant, increasing interest and delight. No matter how often Anne went there — and her visits were almost daily — there was something new to see, something interesting to do.

Every week, a box of flowers was sent to Miss Margery for her 'poor things' in Georgetown. There was always the exciting question as to what flowers would present themselves for the sweet charity. Violets followed jonquils, lilacs bloomed after Japan quinces, apple blossoms and dogwoods came as plum and peach blossoms passed away. Soon — very soon now — there would be no more question about what flowers to send. There would be roses and then roses and again more roses.

At the thought, Anne clapped her hands for joy. "Oh, David, David!" she exclaimed, "aren't roses beautiful?"

"I like corn better," said David, looking proudly at his field.

He had been sent to the mill for chicken feed and had come the roundabout way to see his corn. Wherever David had to go, he came or went 'by' Happy Acres. It was a family joke that if he was sent from the dining-room to the kitchen, he would come back with a report about the crop on his 'plantation,' as they called it. Many a sacrifice did he make of his simple pleasures and simple possessions to hire Tom's 'pleasure hawse' in order to keep the fertile soil fine and soft.

"Corn is pretty," said Anne, generously. "I didn't know how pretty till I saw this of yours."

"Nor I," David agreed. "And since the rain, can't you almost see it grow? Well, I've been at work in this field every

Saturday this month. But I'm not going to be here next Saturday. Gee! we boys are going to have a great old time."

For weeks, the boys had been making plans for a picnic on the river several miles away. Saturday was the day set and as it drew near, the picnic was the chief topic of thought and talk.

On his way home from Happy Acres, David saw Cross-Eyed Tom loafing at the blacksmith shop.

"Hi, Tom!" he called. "You are the very fellow I wanted to see. I want Hip-pity Hop directly after school Thursday."

"I couldn't let you have her nohow, little boss," said Tom, decidedly. "I done promised to take Susan to de meetin' at Redville an' I bleege to go."

"We-ell, Friday, then," said David. "Aw, don't look so grum, Tom. You must let me have the horse. This sunshine after hard rains is making a soil crust, and that corn must be worked this week."

“You know, I done tol’ you I gwine to gi’ you de Sadday ’fusal o’ Flyin’ Lady” — so Tom always called his poor old beast — “an’ it’s discommodious to change.”

“Tom! I’m bound to go to the picnic Saturday and I’m bound to get that corn cultivated before I go,” urged David. “Let me have Hippity Hop to-morrow. Please. And I’ll pay you extra.”

Even a bribe failed to persuade Tom. “I couldn’t do it to-morrer nohow, little boss,” he grinned amiably. “Flyin’ Lady’s a pledzure hawse an’ she got to do de pledzurin’ firs’. Pledzure hawses is jes’ like folks — start ’em to wu’k an’ thar aint no stoppin’-place. If it had ’a’ been any more’n a acre an’ if you’d ’a’ been anybody but Marse Giles’s boy, I wouldn’t ’a’ had her in no crap dis yuh. — Naw, suh; naw, little boss. ’Taint no use talkin’ ’bout to-morrer. I blegged to go to Redville to de Nunion Babtis’ meetin’ an’ Friday I was layin’ off to —”

“Now, Tom,” interrupted David, “if you’ll not let me have the horse to-morrow, you must let me have her Friday. There’s not another horse that isn’t busy and that corn’s got to be cultivated.”

Tom looked worried. “I can’t ’fuse you, little boss,” he said at last. “You so sot, I reckon I got to ’gree to let you have Flyin’ Lady Friday.”

Thursday afternoon, David carried Hippity Hop an armful of fresh crimson clover.

“I’ll bring her corn in the morning,” he said, having learned by experience that it was wiser to feed Hippity Hop than to give her rations to Tom who was inclined to keep them back for a ‘bait’ before a hard drive. “And give her a good rub-down, Tom,” David continued. “I want her to step spry to-morrow. Send her over by half-past two.”

Friday morning, David rose early to take corn for Hippity Hop and to give Tom final charges.

“You be sure to make Amos bring her to Happy Acres by half-past two,” he said to Tom who came out in his Sunday clothes, looking especially demure. “Don’t you let him be late. I’m bound to give that corn a good working to-day. It ought to have had it yesterday.”

“Yas, suh, little boss; yas, suh.”

Something about the readiness of Tom’s speech and the shiftiness of his eyes made David uneasy.

“You going to do what I tell you, Tom?” he asked sharply.

“Yas, suh; yas, suh; cou’s e I is. Cou’s e. I can’t ’fuse you nothin’, little boss. — Is you hear Miss Miranda talk ’bout Chrissy bein’ mighty bad off?”

“Chrissy?” said David. “Why, no. Chrissy’s not sick. Van brought mother a note from Cousin Polly yesterday. Course he would have told if she was sick.”

“Umph!” Tom shook his head doubtfully. “Mandy’s Billy Sam was a-tellin’

me las' night he hear she was mighty bad off wid a misery in her side. She liable to sudden spells, Chrissy is. I set a heap o' sto' by dat gal. She one o' de fambly. Her step-pa was my own cousin."

That Friday was what farmers call a 'growing day,' warm and moist, and, in spite of David's best efforts, his mind would wander from his lessons to his corn which was going to flourish more than ever after its cultivation that afternoon. As soon as his last class was dismissed, he hurried to Happy Acres. It was not quite half-past two, but he was impatient to get to work the minute Amos brought Hippity Hop. While waiting, he loosened the soil around Anne's rose-bushes and fastened up some straggling branches.

Time passed. Amos did not come with Hippity Hop. Once and again, David went to the bend of the path to see if they were in sight. Returning from one of these impatient excursions, he saw two figures

at the other end of the field. There was Amos lagging along the path behind his sister Betty Bessy.

“Amos! you Amos!” David called angrily, “go and bring Hippity Hop. Here I am waiting to plough and you are loafing there, instead of bringing the horse. You go and get her right away.”

Amos nudged his sister. “You tell him,” he said.

Betty Bessy spoke up pertly. “Pa say as how you can’t git de hawse to-day.”

“Can’t get her?” repeated David. “Why — why —” surprise and wrath choked him.

“He say how you c’n git her to-morrer — all day to-morrer, if you want.”

“I don’t want her to-morrow. I’ve got to have her to-day. Tom knows that. I’ll see him and get her myself.” David started rapidly down the path.

Both the children called after him. “De hawse aint thar,” said Betty Bessy. “Pa he gawn,” said Amos.

David paused, white with rage. "Where is Tom? Why didn't he send me the horse as he promised?"

"Pa say he aint promise you pos'tive you c'n git de hawse," Betty Bessy answered. "All he say is he couldn't 'fuse you. An' he hear las' night dat Cousin Chrissy was powerful sick an' she sont for him an' he say he bleegeed to go an' he wouldn't dis'p'int you for nothin' scusin' o' sickness or death an' he bleegeed to go to see about Cousin Chriss an' mammy she was so porely she say how she couldn't walk an' dee mought need her to set up wid Cousin Chriss or wid de corpse if she done dead 'fo' dey git thar." Betty Bessy added one harrowing detail to another as David stood speechless with wrath.

David asked only one more question. "Amos — shut your mouth, Betty Bessy — Amos, what time did they start?" There was a forlorn hope that he might overtake them by running a near way and prevail on Tom to let him have the horse.

“Dey jes’ lef’ when —”

“Shut up, Betty Bessy. Amos, tell me the truth. You better,” David threatened.

“D’rectly arter breakfas’,” blurted out Amos.

That, then, was the meaning of Tom’s Sunday clothes and demure expression. He was waiting for his horse to be fed and had started as soon as David was out of sight.

While David, in silent wrath, was considering these facts, Betty Bessy snickered and trotted down the path, saying, “I sure is glad daddy and mammy’s gone. I gwine to tie Susan Emma to de bedpost an’ gi’ her some bread and ’lasses and I gwine fishin’, too.”

Amos lingered to know if there was anything he could do for David. “If it’s a little plough, I reckon I c’n pull it for you,” he suggested.

David shook his head. But he sent Amos to two or three farms in search — a vain one, alas ! it proved — of a horse that could

be hired that afternoon. He himself went to the mill.

“Father, don’t you know anybody that has a horse I can get ?” he asked.

“A horse? When the land is in order and every farmer is behind with his crop? I don’t suppose there’s an idle work-horse in the county,” said Mr. Spotswood. “I tried yesterday to get a team to take a load of meal to Redville, but I didn’t succeed. I’m sorry, my boy. I wish I could help you but —” he shook his head. There was nothing he could do.

David went forlornly back to The Roost.

“I told you it was foolish to try to raise a crop with no horse to work it,” said Dick, who was just starting to his den. “You better give the whole thing up.”

“I didn’t start to give up. I started to make a corn crop and I’m going to do it,” declared David, his spirits, which had sunk low and lower under Anne’s sympathy, rising to combat Dick.

Sunrise Saturday morning, brought Amos to The Roost, leading Hippity Hop.

"Here de hawse," he said.

"Where's Tom?" asked David. He wanted to relieve his feelings by 'giving Tom a piece of his mind'; that, however, was something which Tom did not care to have.

"Pa he gawn agin," said Amos.

"Is that the truth?" David questioned.

"Yas, suh; dat 'tis. Dey sen's Betty Bessy to tell stories; say I aint got sense 'nough."

"Where did Tom go yesterday?" asked David. "Van came by the mill about sunset and said he didn't come to see Chrissy."

"*I* aint say he did," Amos defended himself. "Dat's what Betty Bessy tol' you. Pa he went fishin'. He driv over to Ennis Pond an' he say bein's how de fish didn't bite yistiddy he reckon dey'd bite to-day, so he went back agin."

"And he told me that story —"

"Pa say he wasn't tellin' you no real lie. Cousin Chrissy mought be sick, but bein's



"SUNRISE SATURDAY MORN-
ING, BROUGHT AMOS TO
THE ROOST, LEADING
HIPFITY HOP"

how she wasn't he went 'long fishin'. You want de hawse?"

David hesitated. It was a beautiful day for the picnic. It was also a beautiful

day to cultivate the corn. And what if he got behind in his work and couldn't — He gulped down his disappointment and fed Hippy Hop.

"I'm not going to the picnic," he announced gruffly at the breakfast table. "Tom sent the horse. I got to plough my corn."

"You've been looking forward to the picnic so long, David," said Mrs. Osborne. "Why not put off the corn till Monday?"

David shook his head dolefully. "You can't farm that way — not good farming. That corn needs cultivating to-day and here's the horse to-day. Monday, I may not get a horse or Monday may not be ploughing weather."

"Oh, David!" Anne was in distress. "It's dreadful for you to miss the picnic."

"Yes. But it would be dreadfuller not to have that corn cultivated," said David hurrying to the cornfield, feeling that he could not bear to see his comrades start without him.

There were 'ohs' and 'ahs' of regret when the other boys learned that he was not going. Stephen wanted to stop the picnic party, take the horses from the wagon, and help David cultivate his corn. "And — the Corn Club rules do say we must do our own work — why, David can work in my crop just as many hours and minutes as I do in his. Wouldn't that be fair, Mrs. Osborne? And then we can eat our picnic dinner and go fishing in Tinkling Water."

Mrs. Osborne was pleased with Steve's generous thought, but she was sure it would be better for David to miss the picnic alone than to spoil the day for all the other boys. Besides he was gone, already at work in his corn. So the wagon drove off without him, Steve exclaiming as it started, "Oh, come, boys! you needn't shout so loud. I reckon, it doesn't make David feel extra good to hear us hurrahing when we're leaving him at the plough."

That Saturday morning was, I am bound to say, a dreary, tiresome one for David. Tom was, as Betty Bessy said with a toss of her head, "too stylish a driver to let a horse ever walk," and Friday's long, hard trip left poor Hippity Hop tired, stiff, and lame. It required even more urging than usual to keep her going, even more care than usual to prevent her trampling the young corn.

As David toiled up and down the rows, he thought almost resentfully of the good time the other boys were having. And Anne might have come to her garden this morning of all mornings, he said to himself, to keep him company. The morning went by with leaden feet. Ah, well! he was nearly done. What a beautiful field it was! There was not a missing hill in all the regular rows. And the earth was as fine as ashes about the flourishing green stalks. He looked around, proudly and admiringly.

In Anne's rose-arbor, a figure was flitting

to and fro. So Anne had come. Making a trumpet of his hands, he called "Coo-ee!"

"Coo-ee!" came the answer.

"Any water?" he asked. Anne usually kept him supplied with cool water from the mill spring.

"'Most done?" came the question in reply.

"Four more rows."

"Refreshments then," called Anne.

As he led Hippity Hop up the path, she ran to meet him. "Oh, David, David," she cried, "do hurry and come to—" she clapped her hand on her mouth and laughed. Then she waited impatiently till he tied the horse with the plough lines. "Now, David," she said, "shut your eyes tight, honor bright, and don't open them till I tell you."

David submitted and Anne led him up the path.

"Open your eyes," she said at last.

He found himself in the arbor with his

father, Mr. and Mrs. Osborne, Patsy, and Sweet William. On the table was a delicious picnic dinner of fried chicken, sandwiches, pickles, and short-cake, — a strawberry short-cake with layers of scarlet berries imbedded in the heart of a sponge-cake such as only Mrs. Osborne could make, feather-light with sugary crust.

“That’s why I couldn’t come this morning,” Anne explained. “I was afraid you were lonesome but I had to pick the berries. There were just enough ripe ones for the short-cake. And isn’t the lemonade good?”

David agreed. After a long draught, the tinkling of the ice against the glass made him thirsty again.

“And I bringed a picnic for Hippy Hop,” said Sweet William, producing a little bag of corn. “And Miss Flora for her company. And when our picnic is all eat up, I reckon I better work some in my garden,” he said importantly.

For Sweet William, too, Happy Acres

was earning its name. He had begged to help work the garden and Anne had set apart a plot for his very own. David feared that his small cousin would dig in the corn or among the flowers, but Sweet William devoted himself to what he called 'all his lonesome's hoe patch.' He planted seeds and, with Anne's help, set out some pansies and petunias. His chief delight, however, was three or four potatoes that Emma gave him which he dug up every few days, to see how fast they were growing.

CHAPTER XXIII

MAY days passed and gave place to June — June with its roses and strawberries and examinations.

The roses and strawberries would go all too soon and examinations could not last forever. And on the heels of examinations would follow vacation.

On its brightness, The Village children saw only one shadow. Anne was to leave them. Her adopted aunt and brother, Miss Drayton and Pat Patterson, were to make a brief visit to The Village and then take her away.

“I shall hate to go as bad as I hated to come,” Anne confided to Patsy. — “I couldn’t hate anything worse. It seemed so dreadful to come all by myself to a Village full of strangers. But people stay strangers such a little while. I’m glad.

That is, I'm glad about most of them. They're mostly lovely when you come to know them. But there are a few people that would make good strangers all the time." She glowered at Dick who had just asked her to explain a problem on which she had failed in class.

"You say that now because Dick is teasing you," laughed Patsy, "but before night you'll make friends. You don't stay mad, Anne."

"I can't," Anne spoke soberly, as if confessing a fault. "I mean to be cross at Dick — he is so provoking! — and then he says something droll and I laugh. You can't laugh and remember to be cross."

"It's lovely to have such a good forgettery for disagreeable things. Oh, Anne, what shall we ever do without you?" Patsy emphasized her words with a kiss.

Anne returned the caress. "You'll not do without me, if we don't study this lesson," she said. "I'll fail on the test and

have to stay here and study all summer. Oh, I can't remember what a complex-compound sentence is !”

“I'd be willing to go to school all summer to have you here, Anne.” Alice, perched on the wood-pile beside Anne, looked up from her history.

“Oh ! Dumpling dear !” Anne gasped and hugged Alice at this utmost proof of devotion. Then, they returned briskly to their lessons.

In the midst of examinations, came Sweet William's birthday.

“When is my birthday day ?” he asked eagerly every morning for a week before the eventful Tuesday. Time after time, he made the rounds of his family and friends.

“I am five years old and going on to be six, pretty soon. How old are you and how old are you going on to be ?” he said, putting his hands on their knees and looking earnestly in their faces.

Most persons answered him frankly and

at once. Miss Fanny Morrison did not seem to hear his question and when he raised his voice and asked again, she said that 'she was older than she was good.'

"I know that," persisted Sweet William, "but how old are you and how old are you going on to be?"

"Oh, I don't remember about birthdays, nowadays," said Miss Fanny, in some confusion.

"Run to the kitchen, son," said Mrs. Osborne, quickly, "and ask Emma to give you some corn-bread for Miss Flora. Maybe she's hungry."

Sweet William trotted off obediently and the subject of birthdays was dropped for the time. He had, however, a way of unexpectedly picking up a subject just where it had been dropped. That day at dinner he took possession of a pause in the conversation and said, looking wonderingly at Miss Fanny, "She don't remember her birthdays."

It seemed that no one heard him, for all at once every one had something to say on some other subject. Mr. Osborne told what was supposed to be a joke and laughed till his face was red. And then Mrs. Osborne said, "William dearie, you may be excused."

"But, mudder, I don't want —"

"Son, you may be excused," she repeated.

He climbed down from his high chair and lingered a minute at her side. "Mudder," he said earnestly, "I just love to remember birthdays. Don't you?"

At last and at last, came the wished-for day. As Sweet William yawned and blinked at the sunlight-arrows piercing the broken window-blinds, his mother came to his bedside.

"Happy birthday and many returns, son boy!" she said, bending over him. "Here are your birthday kisses."

"One, two, three, four, five, — *six!*" Sweet William counted gleefully. "I'm not your little man much longer, mudder."

I'm 'most a big man now." He stared proudly at his image in the dim old mirror. "I tell you, mudder," he said thoughtfully, "I think you ought to stop cutting my hair long. I think you ought to cut it short like Dick's. I'm too grown for long hair."

"Don't grow up too fast, my baby." His mother caught him in her arms and rained more than the birthday number of kisses on his dear, solemn little face. "I need my baby child."

"But I just got to get big, mudder," he reasoned. "Everything I want to do, Dick and David say, 'Oh, go 'way; you too little.' And I want my hair cut off. I reckon you could get another baby. Though they're pretty scarce. There isn't any round here."

His mother laughed and brushed his beautiful, fair hair. Then she rumped it with caressing fingers and brushed and fluffed it out again. "My precious baby," she murmured.

“’Cept Susan Emma,” Sweet William said, pursuing his own course of thought.

On the breakfast table were his gifts, — a ball from his father, a cup and saucer from his mother, a box of candy from Patsy, a jumping-jack from Dick, a top from David. But all these were overshadowed by the gift which Miss Drayton had selected for Anne, a little motor-boat which, when wound up, went chug-chugging around a basin of water. Sweet William devoted hour after hour to this wonderful new toy. He played with it all the morning while his mother was busy with housework; in the afternoon, she left him absorbed with it when she hurried to the Ladies’ Aid Society and she found him absorbed with it when she hurried home to prepare for the birthday party.

Sweet William had been allowed to choose his own guests and he promptly invited Ruth, Alice, and Stephen.

“Patsy and Anne and David are here,”

he said, "and I reckon Dick's got to be. But if he teases one word, mudder, you please invite him to be away."

"That I will," said Mrs. Osborne. "But, son, why do you want the big children? You ought to invite your little cousins that are nearer your own age, — Mary and Nancy and Hugh."

"Oh! ask them, if you want to," said Sweet William. "But I'm getting too old to play with those children."

After Mrs. Osborne prepared 'the party,' as Sweet William called the refreshments, she went into the yard to greet the little guests. All were there at the swing, except Stephen who had run home to get a birthday card and Alice who was coming up the path. But the small host himself was nowhere to be seen.

Mrs. Osborne went to the back porch. "Emma, do you know where Sweet William is?" she asked.

"'Deed I dunno, Miss M'randa," said

Emma, coming to the kitchen door. "I been so tormented jigglin' de ice-cream I aint been noticin' de chile. Gi' me a bucket an' a tub. Dese here new-fangled, outlandish things you call 'freezers' is a worry."

Mrs. Osborne left her grumbling. "Children," she said, "do find Sweet William. Probably, he's playing somewhere with his boat and has forgotten the party."

The children searched the house, the yard, the garden, — all in vain.

"We can't find him, mother," Patsy reported. "We can't find him anywhere."

Mrs. Osborne began to be worried. Sweet William was a sociable little fellow and he usually played near her or Emma while the older children were at school, almost never going beyond the gate without permission.

"Perhaps he's gone to the store," suggested Anne. "You know, he told us this morning that Cousin Will said he kept presents there for little boys."

"Maybe so." Mrs. Osborne started down the path, all the children following and Emma anxiously bringing up the rear.

"There he is; oh, there he is!" rose a chorus of voices.

There at the gate was Sweet William. He trudged up the path, dragging Susan Emma by the hand.

"Come on, now; come on, and I'll give you anudder piece of candy," he was saying persuasively.

"Sweet William, oh, Sweet William!"

"Oh, you little runaway!"

"Where have you been?"

He beamed on them all, without speaking.

"Did you go to invite Susan Emma to your party?" inquired Mrs. Osborne. "But, dearie, you oughtn't to have done that, without asking mother."

Emma held up her hands in horror at the sight of her small grandchild. "Uveh anybody see sich a sight?" she exclaimed. "Dat chile comin' to white folks's house —

to Miss M'randa's — in de middle of a party. An' she dat dirty if you th'ow her 'g'inst de wall, she'd stick. Um, um, um! — I be back, Miss M'randa, jes' soon as I c'n take dis chile home an' whip Amos an' Betty Bessy for lettin' her come." She waddled down the path.

"You just stop," said Sweet William. "You let Susan Emma right alone. You got nothing to do with her. She's our baby now. I bought her."

"What do you mean, Sweet William?" Mrs. Osborne questioned. "Hush, Emma. — Children, stop laughing. — Tell mother about it, son."

"You said you wanted a baby," Sweet William reminded her. "And I just had to have my hair cut and get big. And Susan Emma is the only baby 'round here. She's pretty black, but I reckon if you scrub her good she'll come clean and — whiter. You — you can get five cents out of my bank to buy a big cake of soap."

The children whooped and it was several minutes before Mrs. Osborne could steady her voice to quiet them. Susan Emma wailed aloud. Sweet William's face grew very red and his eyes very bright; he thrust a stick of candy into Susan Emma's wide-open mouth on which she choked, then she gurgled and began to suck it noisily.

"You're the only baby I want, dearie," Mrs. Osborne said as soon as she could speak. "When you get big, I reckon I'll be so busy being proud of my nice man that I'll not miss my baby — much. We must let Emma take Susan Emma home before they miss her and get uneasy."

"But they don't 'spect her back," said Sweet William. "She's a — a 'dopted, like Anne. I bought her, I told you. I gave Amos and Betty Bessy some candy and my boat. — Betty Bessy would have that. Amos didn't want to sell her — not much — but Betty Bessy said she was tired minding that torment anyway."

“But, dearie, her mother and father want her. We must let her go back with Emma. — Now, Emma,” Mrs. Osborne spoke positively, “you must not whip the children. You must not punish them for what Sweet William did.”

“I — I wouldn’t ’a’ stayed so long but the scissors were dull and Betty Bessy couldn’t cut fast,” Sweet William explained.

With a sudden foreboding, his mother snatched off the big straw hat that he had drawn close over his head. Then the children laughed till they cried, and even his mother laughed though her tears were not altogether merry. Betty Bessy had whacked away with more zeal than skill, in some places clipping his locks close to the skin, and in others leaving them long and jagged.

At the children’s shouts of laughter, Sweet William’s lip quivered but he stood his ground. “I — I’m not thinking ’bout crying. I’m too big to cry,” he announced stoutly.



MARY L. BROWN, 1891

"WITH A SUDDEN FOREBODING,
HIS MOTHER SNATCHED OFF
HIS BIG STRAW HAT"

“Hush, children, hush. We mustn’t hurt his feelings,” said Mrs. Osborne. “Well, son boy, what’s done is done. We’ll not laugh any more — nor cry neither. — Patsy, bring my big scissors. — We’ll make your hair look a little better, son, and tomorrow we’ll get Cousin Will to trim it nice and even — if he can. Come, come! We must hurry and get ready for the party.”

His hair was trimmed and Sweet William was taking part in a game of prisoner’s base, played with birthday regard for the shortness of his legs, when Emma returned.

“Here yo’ little boat, honey,” she said. “Here what’s lef’. Dem triflin’, no-count little niggers scratched de paint off’n de side and broke one o’ dem little whirligigs.”

“No. No, they didn’t. I did that,” said Sweet William, calmly.

“Shuh! You done it?” exclaimed Emma.

“How did it happen, son?” asked his mother.

“Oh, I did it on purpose,” said Sweet William. “It was so lovely — and Betty Bessy wouldn’t let me have Susan Emma ’thout I give it to her — and I thought I wouldn’t mind so much, if it was broke. So I broke it.”

“Um, um, um!” commented Emma. “Now, wasn’t dat some’n? Who’d ’a’ ever thunk o’ dat? Dem children say dey didn’t break it, but I made sho dey was lyin’ an’ jes’ whipped ’em harder.”

“Emma,” Mrs. Osborne said severely, “I commanded you not to punish Amos and Betty Bessy.”

“Yap’m, Miss M’randa,” Emma answered meekly. “You tol’ me not to whip ’em for lettin’ Sweet William bring Susan Emma here an’ I didn’t whip ’em for dat. But you aint nuver tol’ me not to whip ’em for spilin’ dat little boat an’ dat’s what I whipped ’em for.”

“But they didn’t do it.”

“Naw’m. But I aint know dey aint

done it," answered Emma. "Well'm, I can't take dem licks off thar backs now, an' law, Miss M'randa, I aint hit 'em a lick amiss. Dem chillen jes' spilin' for whippin's. What I give 'em, will do for sometime dey needs whippin' an' don't git it."

And Emma went in to serve 'the party.'

CHAPTER XXIV

THE day after Sweet William's birthday party found Anne hurrying, with a hop, skip, and jump, to Happy Acres.

She had such a beautiful plan and she was going to arrange about carrying it out. Two persons whose help she needed had promised to come to Happy Acres this afternoon.

Oh, it was such a dear, lovely plan! Just suppose she hadn't thought of it. It was the right-and-properest thing in the world to do. Why hadn't she thought of it before?

They had talked about having a picnic at Happy Acres, before she went away. She had wanted something special and this — why, it was the very thing.

'Daddy dear' had written that she was

to come back to Washington with Aunt Sarah and Pat for a homefolksy celebration of her birthday, with presents and a party too, before they went to Mountain Lake. Anne had decided, to the amusement of her family, that she wanted a cook-book for her birthday present; that was positively her end-of-all choice.

Anne wished she could have her party at Happy Acres and Patsy suggested that she might have a before-birthday party there with her Village friends. But this new plan was so much better that —

Oh, dear! and oh, dear! It seemed to her that she had been waiting hours and hours in the rose arbor. Wasn't any one ever coming? For the dozenth time, she looked impatiently out, along all the paths. Oh! there at last, coming up the path from the mill, was Cousin Giles. Yes, and there, coming the near way from The Village, was Cousin Rodney.

With the roses and shrubs and arbor be-

tween, each was unseen by the other until they came under the archways and stood face to face — together for the first time since their quarrel about the mill.

“Dear Cousin Giles ! dear Cousin Rodney !” Anne greeted them.

“How d’you do, my dear ?” said Mr. Osborne.

“Good day to you, little housekeeper,” said Mr. Spotswood.

“Come in, come right in. I’ve been waiting for you ever so long,” said the little hostess, fluttering from one to the other.

Each stood his ground.

“I — er — just came up for a minute, Nancy pet. I must get back to the mill,” said Mr. Spotswood.

“I am so busy, dear. I haven’t time to come in now,” said Mr. Osborne, at the same time.

“Oh !” Anne looked disappointedly from one to the other. “But the mill isn’t run-

ning to-day, Cousin Giles. And you said you came just to see me this time, Cousin Rodney, and you had nothing to do but to visit with me."

"Any other time except this afternoon. But I have some letters —" Mr. Osborne stopped, for Mr. Spotswood was saying, — "Get some flour barrelled. Of course, it ought to be done to-day."

Anne looked ready to cry. "I have such a beautiful plan," she said. "And I can't carry it out, without asking you both about it. — Why, I believe — Oh ! I thought that was all over. I'd forgotten about it. Are you angry with each other?" There was a little silence. "You aren't angry with Cousin Giles, are you?" she asked, looking at Mr. Osborne.

"Oh, no ! of course not," he said.

"I thought you weren't. Then if he isn't, you can't be, are you?" she asked, turning to Mr. Spotswood.

"Why — er — no."

“Oh !” A sudden thought came to her.
“I didn’t hear you speak to each other.”

“Didn’t we ?” said Mr. Spotswood.
“Ah, good afternoon, Rodney.”

“Good afternoon, Giles,” said Mr. Osborne.

They did not look at each other, but the corners of Mr. Osborne’s mouth twitched and Mr. Spotswood’s voice trembled with laughter. It was rather absurd for two men who had avoided each other for weeks to be standing here saying ‘good afternoon,’ just to please a child who stood between them, tugging at a hand of each.

“Oh, well, if that’s all right,” said Anne, “do please and please sit down comfortably and let’s talk over my plan. I have waited and waited — I really don’t see how I can wait much longer,” she said in a wistful voice. “Please let’s sit down and talk about it. Just a little while.”

“We-ell,” agreed Mr. Spotswood.

“Umph !” Mr. Osborne said — or per-

haps the exclamation was jolted out by his sitting down so suddenly.

"This rock isn't very hard," said Anne, cheerfully. "It'll make me a nice seat while you sit two on the bench there and I tell you about my plan." There was a pause. Then she said questioningly, "Don't you think picnic parties are nice, Cousin Rodney?"

"Yes, indeed."

"But special ones like birthdays, are the pleasantest kind, aren't they, Cousin Giles?"

"Of course they are."

"What do you think about having a birthday party before time?" she asked anxiously.

There was nothing to suggest what kind of answer she wanted to this question, so they hemmed and hawed over it.

Then Mr. Osborne said briskly, "Well, now, that depends."

And Mr. Spotswood promptly agreed, "Yes, of course; that all depends."

Anne went on to explain. "I wanted

a birthday picnic here, and Patsy said — I'm going away before my birthday, you know — she said we could have my party beforehand. But it doesn't seem quite fair. An after-birthday party would be all right, for it would be a party for a birthday that really belonged to me. But a before-birthday party would be taking something that wasn't mine. It mightn't ever be mine" — she dropped her voice — "I might die — or the world might come to an end — or something. Wouldn't it be a — a kind of stealing?"

Mr. Osborne's and Mr. Spotswood's eyes met in a smile over her head. What a dear little, quaint little creature she was!

"Anyway," she said, "I've a much nicer plan. Here's what I want to talk to you about. Why can't we have a picnic party at your beautiful Happy Acres?"

Her eyes consulted Cousin Rodney and he nodded vigorously. "We can. We will," he said.

“A picnic,” she went on, “that’s a birthday party, too — a birthday for your mill.”

She was looking now at Cousin Giles, who exclaimed, “For the mill! Why — why, I don’t understand.”

Anne explained. “Don’t you remember — we noticed it the day of our flood — the mill was finished the eighth of June, 1764? So next Friday is its birthday. I think it will be lovely to celebrate it, don’t you? There’s so much to celebrate! I’ve been remembering what you told me. That it was the first mill in all this country. And before its time, people ground corn in hand-mills or beat it between rocks. Dick and I play those fire marks are its scars of battle that it got in the Revolution. And in ‘The War’ — that was ‘The Village’ name for the great War of Secession — ‘it gave the soldiers bread. It stood fast in that big flood. And it kept us safe, when I’d have been washed away if I’d been in your mill, Cousin Rodney.’”

Rodney Osborne shuddered and put his arm around her.

"You'd rather yours had gone?" she asked.

"A thousand times," he said fervently, thinking of her danger.

But she was thinking only of the mill. "I knew you'd be glad to have that gone. With the lease," she said. "I said it was a mistake. Of course, you wouldn't let another mill be built and you be—that horrid kind of person," she said, avoiding the ugly word 'skinflint.'

His eyes shunned hers.

"This mill is really our-alls, you know, and not just Cousin Giles's," she went on. "It was our 'way-back grandfather that built it, and Cousin Miranda says our folks have eaten its bread for over a hundred years. I like to think about that. And it was our soldiers that it fed," she said proudly. "Of course, it's most yours, Cousin Giles," she added, fearing he would think

she claimed too much. "Cousin Miranda says, staying here and taking care of it, you gave up lots you wanted to do, being a — a doctor, was it?"

"A lawyer." It was Mr. Osborne who answered. "He studied with Red Mayo and me. — You were head and shoulders above us, Giles. Man, you gave up a brilliant career to bury yourself here!"

"Don't call it that," said his cousin, quickly. "My father needed me. And I love the old place," he added simply.

"Oh!" Rodney was busy with thoughts of old days. He hardly heard Anne's chatter till she ended with, "And so I had to ask you two about it. For the picnic is to be at your Happy Acres, Cousin Rodney. And it's for your mill, Cousin Giles. Won't it be fun to have a birthday party for a mill and wish it many happy returns of the day?" she laughed.

Cousin Rodney's face was grave. "Yes," he said. "We will wish it many happy returns of the day."

At his tone, Giles looked up. Their eyes met and then their hands went together in a firm, friendly clasp.

“My ! you are slow remembering to shake hands,” laughed Anne.

The two men had little to say. With Anne between them, they walked presently to the cornfield where David was pulling up some weeds that the cultivator had missed.

“Mother M’ran sent me to the store for some soap,” he explained, “and — she said she wasn’t in a hurry — I came by to see how my corn looks after the rain last night.”

“You don’t mean to say you yourself planted and cultivated this crop ?” said Mr. Osborne. “Why, there’ll be more corn on this one acre than on any five acres Van’s working. And you did it all yourself ?”

“Yes, sir,” said David. “It is all my own work, nobody helping. Of course, I’ve had some hard times. But I’ve man-

aged to pull out of them, so far. So it's all right. Tell you, this would make a fine crop, if I put more fertilizer around it."

"Why don't you put it, then?" asked Mr. Osborne.

"Father hasn't money to give me for it," said David, "and he doesn't approve my going in debt. All the fertilizer I had, I got in trade for old clothes — and gee! didn't Mother M'ran scold."

"Well, well! This is remarkable. A boy that can make a crop like this deserves" — Mr. Osborne remembered what Anne had said about college — "deserves to be helped to go to college."

"I am not going to need any help," said David, proudly. "I am going to pay my own way. And help father, too. I didn't use to care about going to college. But now I do. For the difference between Van's kind of farming and this kind is in what you know. Good farming needs brains, Mr. Alexander says, trained brains."

“Well, well,” said Mr. Osborne again. “This is something to be proud of. But your father is not going to need your help. And I’ll take it as a favor if I may buy that fertilizer.”

“Oh, thank you — if father is willing,” said David; “of course, I’ll pay it back.”

When Anne goes we, too, shall say good-bye to The Village, so we may say here that David was one of the prize winners of the Boys’ Corn Club. When he went to Washington that autumn to visit Anne and Pat, he haunted the Department of Agriculture.

“The men there know so much and are so good about telling it,” he said. “I’m going to be in the Corn Club again next year, and I’ll make some other fellow work mighty hard if he wins first prize.”

CHAPTER XXV

THE next Wednesday afternoon found Anne driving with Mr. Spotswood to the station, to meet Miss Drayton and Pat Patterson. Anne was all eagerness and excitement, for the dearest love of her loyal little heart was given to the friends who, finding her a lonely orphan, had taken her into their hearts and home.

“If I had to wait a day longer, I don’t believe I could stand it,” she said. “Oh! it’s so good of you, Cousin Giles, to take me to the station with you. I’ll see Aunt Sarah and Pat a whole hour sooner than if I had to wait for the carriage to come back. Won’t they be surprised? I wonder if they’ll know me? It’s been so long and I’ve grown so fast! I didn’t write Aunt Sarah that Cousin Miranda had to let down

the tucks in all my dresses. Do you reckon they'll know me?"

"We'll soon find out," Cousin Giles laughed.

"Oh! I can hardly believe Aunt Sarah and Pat are really coming," said Anne. "They are on the way now. And every minute is bringing them nearer. Oh, oh! it seems like a beautiful dream."

"I'll pinch you to see if you are awake," said Cousin Giles.

He gave her arm such a nip that Anne exclaimed "Ouch!" and then in the same breath she said, "I need a harder pinch than that. Why, the beautifuller a thing is, the surer it is to be true. We might dream and dream and dream and we could never imagine things as lovely as they are, — this brook with mosses and ferns and willows, and rocks to make it foam and tinkle, and those pines with their sweet, sorry little song, and that long, wooded hill, and the dimpled fields, and the ripply

wheat and oats, and the sky that is so beautiful and clear and you look into it and look into it and never get to the end of it. It is so lovely that it hurts."

She fell into a happy silence that lasted till they drove up to the station. Then, she was all eager excitement.

"I can hardly wait," she exclaimed. "I do hope the train isn't late. Please, please ask if it's on time."

It was only a few minutes late and soon Anne was in Miss Drayton's arms, trying to look at and talk to and listen to both Miss Drayton and Pat at the same time. She wanted to know in one breath about 'daddy dear,' about her Cousin Dorcas Read, about Miss Margery Hartman, about the Callahan family. And there was so much to tell !

Tea at The Roost that evening passed beyond an ordinary meal and became a festivity. Anne's friends — and that meant every family in The Village — sent their

best dishes and choicest food in honor of her guests. She felt that it would be ungrateful to slight any, and so, at her special request, all the contributions appeared upon the table.

The result was so remarkable that Mrs. Osborne felt called upon to explain, to the huge amusement of her guests. Mrs. Tavis's batter-yeast bread was flanked by Mrs. Wilson's chicken loaf and an old ham baked by Mrs. Blair's famous recipe, and — but I will not weary you with a list of the breads and salads and pickles and preserves and cakes that were added to Mrs. Osborne's own bountiful supply of food.

Just at tea time, Susan hurried in, breathless, with a basket and a message — there was no time for a note — from Mrs. Wilson; the rolls had come to her table so especially light that she sent them, smoking hot, not knowing how Emma's bread might turn out that evening.

Less delicious food would have been ap-

petizing served, as it was, in the choicest of the family silver, the gold-banded, egg-shell china, the cut-glass bearing a grandfather's monogram.



"JUST AT TEA TIME,
SUSAN HURRIED IN"

The first place Miss Drayton and Pat must see was, of course, the mill. They listened and laughed and shuddered at the story of 'Anne's flood,' as every one called that April freshet.

From the mill, they went to Larkland, unoccupied except for Van and Chrissy in a cabin in the yard. And Anne told over and over about kind Cousin Polly and dear Cousin Mayo.

Then, they went to Broad Acres House, with its stately halls, its spacious rooms, its quaint landscape wall-papers, its old mahogany furniture, its dingy family portraits, its silver and books engraved with a coat-of-arms.

“It is all just as it was — every picture in the same place — as when Anne’s mother and I were girls together here,” said Mrs. Wilson.

At Anne’s request, Mrs. Wilson brought down her Mopsy that was the comrade of Anne Mayo’s favorite doll Topsy and she showed the old playroom, now the school-room, with its ‘picture paper.’

“I’m going to add another birthday gift to that cook-book which was Anne’s ‘end-of-all’ choice,” said Miss Drayton aside to Pat.

“I am going to write to your father and ask him to select a landscape paper for Anne’s room, to remind her of this dear place.”

Pat had told David and Patsy — he was bound to tell somebody and, of course, it was a secret from Anne — about the birthday presents they had at home for her.

“There’s the cook-book she wanted — Marion Harland’s big fat one. Aunt Sarah has a ring with her name on it in jewels. And dad got her the dandiest desk, with dozens of little drawers and pigeonholes. I bought a desk set for it — blotter and stamp box — blue leather with her monogram in silver. Now, I may know again the taste of chocolates and ice-cream. I’m glad Anne doesn’t expect us to give the mill birthday presents. A birthday party for a mill! Who but Anne would ever have thought of such a thing?”

Miss Drayton said that it was a pretty idea and Happy Acres was a lovely place for

a picnic. She agreed with Anne that the flower garden and the cornfield were nice neighbors.

“Don’t you remember,” said Anne, “how Miss Margery’s always saying people ought to have bread and roses too? Well, here they are and we helped about them, David and I, and that makes them nicer.”

“Yes. That’s true always,” said Miss Drayton, thoughtfully. “I saw Miss Margery a few days before I left the city, dear. She says your flowers give untold pleasure and do more good than many sermons. All Thistle Alley cleans up on Saturday, to match the posies. It will miss them.”

“Alice and Ruth and Patsy are going to take turns sending flowers as long as they last,” said Anne. “David cuts the roses. I think that’s the hardest part. You can’t help getting buds; they’ve taken so much trouble to grow and they want to be roses. It seems almost wicked to cut them. David does it careful. One day when he was busy,

Dick cut them. But I never asked him to do it again. He just whacked away and looked as if he enjoyed doing it," she said in an aggrieved tone.

Miss Drayton laughed.

"Happy Acres will miss you," said Mr. Rodney Osborne, who had come up while Anne was talking. "I wish you could stay here and keep on taking care of it. But you are going away and then—oh! Happy Acres will never be Happy Acres any more."

"I do wish it could be like this all the time," said Anne, looking wistfully around,—"arbor and roses and jonquil bed—oh, yes! and David's corn. Wouldn't it be dreadful if next year some one would have tobacco here, and, oh! what if they should plough up the flowers?" She looked distressed at thought of this possible calamity.

"You'll not be here to see it," Mr. Osborne reminded her.

"But it would be lovely to know it was still Happy Acres. I could shut my eyes

and see it. I don't want to shut them and see tobacco."

"When you go away, it would run wild again," he said.

"No ; oh, no, Cousin Rodney !" said Anne. "The others love it, too, now they've got acquainted with it. It wouldn't be lonesome again. Nearly every one in The Village comes here Sunday afternoons. Oh ! I'd give anything if it could always be just Happy Acres."

"Would you like —" Mr. Osborne began, then he stopped abruptly and began discussing plans for the picnic.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE eighth of June arrived at last, as fair a day as heart could wish, and all The Village—from Sweet William to old Mr. Tavis—came to the mill's birthday picnic. Cousin Polly Osborne drove from Mattoax for the occasion.

“I had a letter from Mayo a few days ago,” she said to Anne; “he sent you these photographs from Old Mexico. He says tell you he is bringing back a lot of new stories — and I may look for him home any day.” Her pale little face lighted with joy.

Every one was in holiday spirits. And how beautiful Happy Acres was! The turf around the flagged walk was like emerald; the pansies held up their cheerful purple-and-yellow faces to the sun; and the roses — ah, the roses! — they threw abroad their

wealth of blossoms like a thank-offering for Anne's care after their long years of neglect.

"It's fine and dandy, Nancy 'Anne,'" exclaimed Pat. "Fine and dandy! didn't you enjoy finding a place like this?"

"And I enjoyed helping it be beautiful," said Anne, with shining eyes.

"You don't think she found it like this, do you?" asked David who wanted Anne as well as the garden to have dues of praise. "I wish you had seen it last year. Black-berry bushes and weeds were so tall and thick you could hardly see the rose-bushes. There wasn't any arbor, just a few tumble-down posts and boards. You'd have passed by and never known it had been a garden. It's taken work, hard work. — Remember the day, Anne, you were training this Cherokee rose on the arbor and a branch caught your frock in the middle of the back? The more you wriggled, the worse caught you were. Gee! you might have been there

now, if I hadn't been in my cornfield and come and untangled you."

"I thought I'd never make you hear. And you got your hands full of thorns," Anne reminded him. "It was the day after the wind-storm blew down your corn. You went up and down the rows straightening it and when you got to the end of the field you lay on the ground —"

"So tired I thought I'd never get up," interrupted David.

"Oh ! I remember that day," said Patsy. "You were picking thorns out of David's hands when I came. I ran over here to bring you some hot gingerbread. Remember?"

Anne nodded and David smacked his lips at the memory. "It was splenlicious," he said, borrowing one of Patsy's words.

"And I bringed you strawberries," said Sweet William who was listening with interest.

"Not that day, Sweet William," said Anne. "That was another day."

“Huh ! the less said about those strawberries the better,” scoffed David. “Mother M’ran said you started with the little basket ’most full and when you got here —” with a grimace, he left the sentence in the air.

“I just tasted ’em,” said Sweet William, with an injured air.

“And kept on and kept on and kept on ‘just tasting,’ ” jeered David.

Sweet William looked injured and snuggled in his mother’s lap.

“I’ve been trying to decide which is the prettiest outlook,” said Miss Drayton, gazing from one and then another of the four openings of the rose-covered arbor. “And I can’t. All are so attractive.”

“I like that best,” said Patsy, pointing to the flagged walk that led across the turf between flower beds and the fair, fragrant, old-fashioned sisterhood of roses.

“So do I,” said Alice. “And think ! This was here last year and all the years

before, right at us, and Anne had to come to find it !”

“That beats all the rest — but I wouldn’t have had it, if it hadn’t been for Anne.” David pointed to the thrifty dark green of his corn ; in the background, was the fresh green of the summer woods and overhead the shining blue of the rain-washed heavens.

“I like down there.” Dick nodded toward Tinkling Water.

“Dick’s thinking about pirate dens,” said Steve.

The other children laughed.

“There’s a charm about those pine woods,” said Miss Drayton. Slim and straight and tall rose their pillars ; underfoot was a carpet of clean, odorous brown ; overhead a canopy of eternal green with sweet, mournful melody wandering there.

“I love them all. The one I look at last is the prettiest.” Anne breathed a sigh of deep content.

"Now isn't that like Nancy Anne? She likes everything," said Pat.

"I didn't like you when you teased me about my poor old doll, Honey-Sweet," flashed Anne.

"Oh! You forgave me two minutes later and begged pardon for me when mother and Aunt Sarah were going to punish me," Pat reminded her.

"*I* know." Dick's eyes twinkled as he remembered various experiences of his own.

"I never can stay cross," confessed Anne. "Anyway, people, — oh! everything's so much nicer than it's unnice; isn't it, Aunt Sarah?"

Miss Drayton smilingly agreed. She drew Anne close and kissed the soft hair and the candid brow. "Ah, it's good to have you again, my little girl," she said, "and rosy and strong."

"Did you miss me?" Anne asked wistfully.

"Miss you?" echoed Miss Drayton, and

"Miss you?" chimed in Pat. Their tones were sufficient answer.

"We think the only bad part about her coming is her going away," said Mrs. Osborne. "I wish we could keep her always."

"What a love feast!" commented Pat.

The word 'feast' was suggestive.

"What are we going to do till it's time to eat?" asked David.

"How long before time to open the lunch baskets?" asked Dick. "I'm so empty."

"I'm not exactly hungry," said Steve. "But the baskets are so fat and good-smelly it makes my mouth water to look at them."

"It's only a little after eleven o'clock," said Mrs. Osborne, "but you boys may start a fire somewhere. It's so much fun to cook at a picnic."

"The best place to build a fire is in front of the pirate den," said Stephen, gravely. "Ask Dick. He knows."

With jests and laughter, the merry party straggled downhill, through the summer woods, to Tinkling Water, rippling among rocks at the foot of the rhododendron-fringed bluff. The boys brought brushwood, to feed the fire which Dick kindled in front of the pirate den.

While eggs and little new potatoes were being roasted in the fire; the girls gathered ferns and great clusters of pink rhododendron and cream-white magnolia to decorate a flat rock that they selected for a table. The baskets were unpacked and the 'table' was piled with eatables, — rolls, beaten biscuit, fried chicken, thin pink slices of old ham, a dozen kinds of pickles, and countless varieties of sandwiches each tasting better than the one before. There were pitchers full of lemonade and cold tea.

"Now, this part of the picnic is over," said Mrs. Osborne.

"Why, mother! I thought —" Dick

interrupted himself. It would not do to say that he thought the cake she made the day before was for the picnic.

“I know what you thought,” said Steve, in an undertone; “so did I. Well, anyway, I don’t think we — ah, left much room for cakes and pies and tarts, even if they’re as good as Patsy’s April-fool preserve pies.”

“If there was any more to eat, I reckon I’d have to do as Anne says the Callahans did at their Christmas dinner — run around the table so as to make room for dessert,” said Patsy.

“Yes,” agreed Pat, who insisted on sitting by Patsy and called her his ‘twin’ because his name and her nickname were so much alike. “I’m like the old negro in Mr. Page’s story, ‘I couldn’t put anurr mou’ful nowhar cep’n I tuck my hat.’”

Anne whispered something to Cousin Miranda who said: “Now, young folks, amuse yourselves as you choose. Please don’t

go back to the arbor until you hear the signal — this” — a shrill note on a silver whistle — “but don’t wander too far away. Have a good time and when you hear the whistle, follow the sound.”

“Secrets !” said Patsy.

“I love ’em,” said Dick.

At Steve’s suggestion, the boys began to build a dam across Tinkling Water in order to make a pool deep enough to float a raft made by tying together pieces of board. Barefooted, they splashed around in the water, rolling large stones in place and filling in with small stones and gravel. They worked like beavers, all except Dick who stood on a big rock and told the others what to do.

“Use your hands more, Dick, and your tongue less,” advised David, tugging away at a heavy stone till he was red in the face. “Give a lift here.”

“Oh, Dick !” jeered Steve, “he can do more light lifting than anybody else, but

when it comes to heavy lifting he's not there."

Dick joined in the laugh at his own expense and helped put the stone in place, taking care to drop it so as to give Steve a splashing.

Some of the girls collected ferns to set in the fernery behind the school-house. Others started to walk down-stream but it took a long time to go a little way; there were grasses to twist into grasshopper houses, elder for whistles, shining shallows to wade in, rapids to float leaf boats.

"Why, there's the whistle — so soon!" exclaimed Patsy, in surprise.

Guided by the sound, they joined Mrs. Osborne at the edge of the clearing. She gave each of the children a little wooden dish.

"You are to fill these," she said, "with — what David shows you. Then, come to the arbor."

David, refusing to make any explanation,

led them through a tangle of briers and bushes to — they knew what it was before they saw it, for there is nothing so fragrant and few things as delicious as wild strawberries.

“Oh !” and “ah !” exclaimed the children, and they exclaimed “oh !” and “ah !” over again when they saw the open space in the woodland, thick-set with luscious scarlet berries.

“To think I’ve roamed these woods and never found this patch !” exclaimed Dick.

“It was happen-chance I found it,” said David. “It’s only a little place in the bushes. I was looking for grass for Hip-pity Hop. The strawberries were just blooming then. I showed them to Anne and we decided to keep it a secret till the berries were ripe.”

In a little while, the dishes were heaped with berries, topped with beautiful clusters and edged with leaves. At the rose arbor, another surprise was awaiting the

children. The rustic table was piled with cakes and tarts and there was ice-cream to serve with their berries. What a merry time they had, feasting, laughing, pelting one another with rose leaves !

In honor of the mill's birthday, its story was told from its building to 'Anne's flood' and then a toast was drunk in clear, cool water from the mill spring: "Here's wishing the mill a future as good as its past. Long may it be the best and only mill of The Village."

"Here's to the mill. Hip, hip, hurrah !"
The boys gave a rousing cheer.

Mrs. Red Mayo Osborne turned to Rodney. "Giles tells us," she said, "that you are not going to rebuild the new mill. I wish you could realize what a load that lifts from all our hearts, how happy we are, how grateful we are —"

"How surprised you are, all except Anne," interrupted Mr. Rodney Osborne; "she's been telling how good and generous

I am until — well, now she's making you all believe it. No, I am not going to rebuild the mill. As a matter of fact, I no longer own the site. That land, the plot in the bend of Tinkling Water that the children call Happy Acres, has passed from my possession. I made out the deed to-day."

A cloud came over the bright faces. Surely Rodney had not sold that field to Chandan? Who was the new owner of the land? What was to be feared or hoped from him?

Rodney Osborne broke the anxious silence. "This paper," he said, taking from his pocket a legal-looking document and showing it to Anne, "is what we lawyers call 'a deed of gift.' It says in many words to go on record forever, what I can say in few words, — I give you Happy Acres, Anne, for your very own. May you come often to see it and may it go on earning its name."

For a long minute, Anne was speechless

with amazement and joy. Then she exclaimed, "Thank you, thank you, Cousin Rodney! Why, Cousin Rodney, I'd rather have it than anything else in the world — than everything else I know. It's David's cornfield, and Dick's pirate den, and Sweet William's 'hoe patch,' and my dear rose arbor, and The Village picnic place, and the 'poor things' flower garden. It's — it's — oh, it's Happy Acres!"

"And you are to decide whether or not it's to be the site of a new mill," said Mr. Osborne, with a smiling side glance at Mr. Spotswood.

"There never shall be any mill here but Larkland," said Anne, stoutly.

"There is one thing I want to do — if the new owner will permit," said Mr. Osborne, — "that is, put a dam across Tinkling Water below Tayloe Creek and make a mill race that will give good, dependable water-power to the old mill."

Anne drew a deep breath. "Oh," she

said, "I know we are the very happiest people in the world."

The long afternoon shadows were falling when the picnickers turned their steps homeward.

At the edge of the clearing, Anne paused and kissed her hand again and again toward the rose arbor: "Good-by, Happy Acres!" she said. "My dear Happy Acres, good-by, good-by! I'll come to see you often as I can, and, oh, what a joy to know you are here — and always and always, you are Happy Acres!"

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